

## **No. 0118**

(Emergency Sense-of-the-Assembly)

### **CALLING ON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) TO JOIN THE DECADE TO OVERCOME VIOLENCE**

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

#### **Background Information**

At the Eighth General Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, the World Council of Churches (WCC) named the decade beginning 2001 as the Decade to Overcome Violence. This significant call to its member churches grew out of the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women and its plea for the church to face the issue of violence against women around the world, as well as a request from the churches in South Africa, after decades of violence in that land, for the church to help the world find new ways of dealing with conflict. Moreover, the United Nations was planning to focus its efforts to ending violence at the same time.

At the recent WCC Central Committee meeting in Berlin, the Decade to Overcome Violence was launched at the foot of the Brandenburg Gate, where the Berlin Wall once stood. Representatives of churches around the world lit candles and dedicated themselves to finding ways to end violence in their homes, in their churches, in the societies, and in our world.

#### **Introduction**

The Decade to Overcome Violence, then, is an opportunity for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—our local churches, our regions, our seminaries, our affiliated institutions, our general ministries—to become a part of a worldwide movement to end violence in the world in our lifetime. The church has a particular role to play as moral agent and as the church of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

This is an opportunity to make real in our every day lives our Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) commitment to ecumenism and to make a difference in the lives of those we serve at the same time. Each entity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is invited to find ways to make the Decade to Overcome Violence a reality in our own place of mission.

Each of us will find a different way of fulfilling this mandate, but in joining with other churches we do have the power to make a real change in the world.

---

## Summary

This resolution calls upon the various settings of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to take an active role in the Decade to Overcome Violence and to join together and with other denominations and organizations in doing so. Doing so, we shall overcome some day . . .

WHEREAS, the Psalmist wrote, “Seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14), and the prophet Isaiah wrote “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like cattle, They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain” (Isaiah 65:25), and Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9); and

WHEREAS, we recall with thanksgiving the history of saints and martyrs of the church who gave their lives as witnesses for God against the powers of violence and at the same time we confess the role that the church has too often played in adding to the violence and injustice of the world; and

WHEREAS, the world’s Nobel Peace laureates have appealed for a “Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence,” and a “Year of Education for Nonviolence,” with special emphasis on children and youth; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations has designated the years 2001-2010 as the Decade for Nonviolence and a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World; and

WHEREAS, the World Council of Churches, meeting at its Eighth Assembly in Harare, called upon its member churches to observe a Decade to Overcome Violence from 2001 to 2010, calling upon its member churches to provide a clear witness to peace, reconciliation and nonviolence, grounded in justice; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Conference of the World Council of Churches began this observance with a Lenten fast from violence in 2001, requesting member churches to pray the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, “Lord make me an instrument of thy peace;” and

WHEREAS, many local churches have designated themselves as Shalom Congregations; and

WHEREAS, violence is fracturing our world, destroying our culture, and takes many forms—from the violence of war and genocide, to the violence due to the use of land mines and the proliferation of small arms, to the systemic violence of poverty and racism, to violence in the home against women and children, to the violence done to the whole of God’s creation, to the violence of hate crimes and police brutality, to the violence of gangs, to the violence which erupts in U.S. schools and is found in our churches; and

WHEREAS, as Christians, we are called upon to recognize that our cultural addiction to violence is a spiritual challenge that calls us to prophetic witness; and

WHEREAS, we have heard the call to non-violence as an active alternative to violence from modern prophets such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and as a way of living out Jesus' teachings and bearing witness to God's promise of peace with justice; and

WHEREAS, the culture of violence surrounds us all and is found in our entertainment, our sports, our world view, and is embedded in our history;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Kansas City, July 13-17, 2001 calls upon every local church to act to overcome violence in our world and especially in its own community by being a witness for peace with justice and reconciliation, through Bible study and theological reflection, and through dialogue and prayerful consideration of how it can be active participants in the Decade to Overcome Violence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Kansas City, July 13-17, 2001 calls upon the seminaries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the historically-related seminaries to include education on issues of violence in the curriculum for the preparation of pastors and in continuing education programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the general units coordinate work in the general ministries of the church around overcoming violence and provide leadership training on non-violence and conflict resolution and violence prevention education, to work with youth and young adults in programs to end violence, to advocate for an end to land mines and the proliferation of small arms, and to work to overcome the institutional and systemic violence of racism and poverty; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Assembly call upon the Division of Overseas Ministries to explore appropriate ways for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to participate in the United Nations Decade for Nonviolence and a Culture of Peace and to develop necessary resources for such participation.