

NO. 0514

(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)

**DENOUNCING HATEFUL SPEECH AND ACTION AIMED AT GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL
AND TRANSGENDER PERSONS, AND RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT
TO THE PROCESS OF DISCERNMENT**

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

WHEREAS, the rhetoric aimed at gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons is often volatile and hateful, both within and outside the church; and

WHEREAS, the issues of sexual and gender orientation have been used by religious and elected officials to divide our local faith and civic communities, particularly among racial and ethnic communities; and

WHEREAS, the latest hate crime statistics from the FBI show an alarming increase in incidences of violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons, with such incidences now comprising the second largest segment of hate crimes in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, whenever Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) clergy and lay leaders use vilifying and inhumane language, the atmosphere of hostility and violence increases toward those who are, or who are perceived to be, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender within our own community; and

WHEREAS, Christian scripture and teaching proclaim that all of humanity is created in the sacred image of God, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) affirmed this as recently as the 2001 General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the 1997 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) approved a time of discernment regarding the participation of gay and lesbian persons in the life of the church;

WHEREAS, regions and congregations engaged in it report that the process of discernment has resulted in strengthening true community, deepening Christian spirituality and igniting a passion for justice; and

WHEREAS, discernment materials (Listening to the Spirit – handbook and video) were developed to assist Disciples in engaging in the discernment disciplines of prayer, reflection, Bible study and sharing personal experience as we listen for God's call for the church;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Portland, Oregon, July 23 – 27, 2005, denounces all forms of spiritual and physical violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, including language meant to demonize and vilify; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2005 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) reaffirms its commitment to a prayerful process of discernment concerning the gospel message to the church as we relate to lesbian and gay Christians; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that the 2005 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) -- acknowledging the current financial crisis regarding Disciples Mission Fund -- directs the Office of General Minister and President to prioritize the above named discernment process by:

- Appointing and working with a skilled team of volunteer Disciples to develop a strategic plan to further promote and monitor progress of the discernment process among all Disciples
- Working with appropriate organizations and individuals – within and beyond Disciples – to secure alternative funding sources
- Encouraging use of Listening to the Spirit materials by those who engage the process; and
- Reporting back progress on this initiative to each General Assembly.