

**NO. 0519**  
**(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)**  
**ENCOURAGING INTERRELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT**  
**ADOPTED by the General Assembly**

**Background:** The reality that Christianity exists in a religiously plural world is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, Christianity's very birth and infancy occurred within the matrix of Judaism and the philosophical/mystery-religious setting of the Roman world. However the unprecedented surge of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons in recent decades, along with the advent of certain communication and transportation technologies, has intensified religious diversity in many places in the world and has brought to consciousness an increased awareness of the presence of other religions. Recent events in the United States and across the globe have further highlighted the significance of world religions and their influence on economics, politics, and culture.

Yet even while North American Christians increasingly live and work alongside people of other faiths, we are often woefully ignorant of the beliefs, practices, and traditions that nurture and shape their lives. Such ignorance can and often has resulted in fear, distrust, violence, hatred, and the dehumanization of our neighbors in other faiths. Such lack of understanding also can and at times has led to the easy acceptance of misguided and harmful stereotypes which hinder genuine relationships and foster attitudes of apprehension and hostility. Hence we recognize an urgent need to cultivate deeper levels of

understanding between ourselves and our neighbors in other religious traditions and celebrate that in our Christian theological heritage that enables us to embrace ways of trust and community building.

WHEREAS, we believe that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has an obligation to be a community of witness to the God we know in Jesus Christ in the midst of our violence-prone contemporary world; and

WHEREAS, part of this witness necessarily entails conversing with, listening to, learning from, and living peacefully with those in different religious traditions; and

WHEREAS, we understand interreligious dialogue and work as key components of peace-building and reconciliation; and

WHEREAS, Jesus says that the whole of the law and the prophets are summarized in the commandment to love God and love one's neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40); and

WHEREAS, loving one's neighbors surely entails knowing them, listening to them, sharing with them, respecting them, and treating them as we would want to be treated; and

WHEREAS, we see further evidence in Holy Scripture of a clear responsibility to welcome and show hospitality to strangers (Hebrews 13:2); and

WHEREAS, in the midst of a religiously pluralist society, we feel called to work with others for the well-being of the world and the strengthening human life in community and we recognize that when we act with our partners from different faith traditions we can respond better together to a needy world; and

WHEREAS, we understand interreligious engagement as a positive means to building bridges of trust across differences and as one way of living out our Christian witness; and

WHEREAS, much important work has been done in recent years by the Consultation on Interfaith Dialogue and Relations, which arose out of the Council on Christian Unity working with the Council for Ecumenism of the United Church of Christ, and whose recent report sees in our unique history and identity as Disciples of Christ even further incentive for interreligious engagement;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Portland, Oregon, July 23-27, 2005, commend Report No. 0518, "Disciples of Christ and Interreligious Engagement," to all manifestations of the Church as a document for teaching and study; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly directs the Council on Christian Unity to develop a study guide to accompany Report No. 0518 and to provide additional resources for interreligious relationship building and work. This study guide is to be available no later than January 2006. Such resources should offer guidelines for dialogue as well as suggestions for how to begin conversations and encounters with people in other faith traditions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly urges congregations, areas, regions, and general manifestations of the Church to actively seek out ways in their own settings to develop relationships with persons in other faith communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly urges our seminaries to address interreligious issues and to make interfaith experience and knowledge important elements in ministerial formation and education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly urge the Church to utilize programs developed by the Common Global Ministries Board and staff that share the first-hand experiences and insights of our global missionaries and partners who have been in dialogue and relationship with persons in other faith communities for many years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all the above actions be attempted ecumenically where possible.