

NO. 0717
(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)
CONCERNING THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE CHURCH

WHEREAS, God created humanity in God's image and proclaimed creation good; and

WHEREAS, God has called us to be good stewards of all that has been created; and

WHEREAS, our bodies are temples of God, making them among the most precious gifts for which we are to care; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 60% - 70% of Disciples clergy are clinically obese, which over time leads to a variety of health issues that make vibrant leadership more challenging; and

WHEREAS, the medical pathologies that have resulted in the greatest dollar outlay for medical services as measured by Christian Church Health Care Benefit Trust in 2006 were, in decreasing amount, Hypertension, Coronary Artery Disease, Diabetes, Depression, Congestive Heart Failure, Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Cancer and that each of the pathologies are either a direct result of or is greatly exacerbated by stress and obesity; and

WHEREAS, the medical pathologies that have resulted in the long term disability of pastors and lay employees, as measured by disability benefits provided through the Pension Fund of the Christian Church in 2006 were Depression, Arthritis, Nervous Disorders, Cardiovascular, Disorders, Cancer, Back Disorders, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Liver Disease, Diabetes, and that many of the disabling pathologies can also be linked to unmanaged stress; and

WHEREAS, a reduction in the average body mass of clergy by five BMI points (approximately 40 pounds) would result in an estimated reduction in medical costs of approximately 25% and increase the average life expectancy of clergy by approximately four years; and

WHEREAS, total receipts for all causes among reporting congregations has increased by 26.3% over the past ten years, Disciples outreach has increased by only 4.5%, while health care premiums have risen by more than 209%, resulting in a financial hardship for congregations and wider ministries and an inflation adjusted reduction of nearly 17% in funds available for congregational ministries; and

WHEREAS, the number of disciplinary proceedings toward clergy have grown in number over the past ten years, for which causes of action can be traced to bad behavioral decisions in an environment of stress and support isolation; and

WHEREAS, health and wellness are important elements of one's spiritual discipline, equipping and enabling pastors to serve and lead more vibrantly; and,

WHEREAS, the 2020 Vision of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calls for:
The formation of 1,000 new congregations

The transformation of 1,000 current congregations
The calling and forming of new leaders and continuing renewal and transformation of
current leaders
Becoming an anti-racist/pro-reconciling church; and

WHEREAS, the achievement of each of the goals set out in The 2020 Vision requires healthy, vibrant, committed, skilled, and well grounded leaders;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that Disciples clergy be encouraged to model ministries of self-care as reflected in their spiritual disciplines of well-being and as reflected in their attention to intellectual, emotional, physical, social/interpersonal, vocational and spiritual activities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that seminaries be called upon to provide as part of the seminary experience and curriculum, program opportunities for developing future leaders' healthy life and leadership skills; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that regions be encouraged to address health and well-being of clergy in Nurture and Certification procedures and programs, so as to assist clergy to address healthy life choices and leadership issues in their ministries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Christian Church Healthcare Benefit Trust, in conjunction with the Pension Fund and Disciples Home Missions, seek to establish programs and services designed to address health and well-ness of clergy and lay employees, and create support systems that are safe havens for clergy in need of emergency support; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly calls upon all members and congregations to continue support for the Heartbeats of Faith campaign, which seeks to establish the financial resources needed to offer health and well-ness programs for clergy and lay employees.

Pension Fund of the Christian Church
Disciples Home Missions

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 0717. (Debate time 12 minutes).