

**NO. 0719**  
**(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)**  
**RESOLUTION CONCERNING WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY**  
**AND RECONCILIATION MISSION**

**Introduction**

In too many of our churches and for too long, World Communion Sunday (WCS) and the Reconciliation Mission Offering (RMO) emphases, both falling on the first Sunday in October, have been coincidental but not combined. This separation comes from viewing the two emphases programmatically rather than theologically. Programmatically WCS is ecumenical; RMO is denominational. WCS is liturgical; RMO is missional. Because these are seen as programmatically different, churches often choose to emphasize only one. Theologically the aims of ecumenism and the aims of racial justice belong together in the ministry of Jesus Christ. WCS and RMO should thus be understood, reflected upon, expressed and celebrated together.

Perhaps a more subtle underlying reason for the separation of WCS and RMO emphases relates to the message of the two programs. WCS is a celebration of our essential unity; RMO is a confrontation of our lingering differences. The unity of the body of Christ is foremost an achievement by God, while racism is the result of powers and principalities in our world and in our lives -- the very powers and principalities overcome through Christ's death and resurrection. The combination of WCS and RMO would provide us with the opportunity to emphasize one of the historic understandings of the table: that is, before the grace of God, we are pronounced both guilty of sin and justified before God. In context, at the Table of the Lord we confront our divisive racism with God's gift of unity in the one body of Christ.

**Biblical Background**

Ephesians 2 reveals a clear connection between our remembrance of Christ's death and our work for human reconciliation. Ephesians 2:1-10 relates how God offers grace in response to human sin. Grace is received by faith. In faith, God re-creates the faithful in the image of Christ. Ephesians 2:11-22 shows the social-ethical implications of grace. By reconciling individual people to God's self, God has also reconciled all people to one another. The divisions described in Ephesians refer to religious and ethnic divisions of their time. God continues to create one humanity out of the disparate groups today. Today, Christ breaks down the walls of hostility and becomes our peace.

Many people come to the table with only the emphases personal salvation, personal recreation, and personal vocation in their minds (the concerns of Ephesians 2:1-10). But these emphases are not separated from the good news for the whole of humanity (the concerns of Ephesians 2:11-22). Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are the work of Christ and the message of the Table.

## **Historical Background**

WCS began in 1936 as Worldwide Communion Sunday in the Presbyterian Church as an effort to unite all Presbyterian fellowships in one global expression. In 1940, Jesse Bader, a Disciples minister then serving as Director of the Evangelism Department at the Federal Council of Churches, promoted WCS as an ecumenical and evangelistic effort. WCS gives visible expression to the unity of Christ's church in order to bear witness to the world.

RMO emerged in 1973, in part, out of the Urban Emergency Program as the Disciples response to the "Black Manifesto" that James Forman, a Civil Rights Leader in the United States, issued in 1969 calling for \$500 million in reparations from American churches for their perpetuating slavery. The RMO generates funds that would enable both local efforts and programming to overcome racial injustice, and the work of Reconciliation Ministries in the general expressions of the church.

One of the primary aspects of the vision of unity for the CCU is that of seeking to be a multicultural and more inclusive church. As well, other ecumenical ventures, like CUIC has made racial reconciliation one of the primary marks of a truly ecumenical church.

## **Resolution**

WHEREAS, bringing together the celebration of World Communion Sunday (with its emphasis on Christian unity) and Reconciliation Mission Offering (with its emphasis on racial justice) would offer benefits to both emphases as they are seen to be mutually beneficial and endorsing; and

WHEREAS, Disciples have always believed that the unity of the church and oneness among all Christians is received as a gift of God and experienced in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and at the same time, that this unity must be expressed in the pursuit of God's justice and reconciliation of all peoples;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly meeting in Ft. Worth, Texas, July 21-25, 2007, recommends that World Communion Sunday and the Reconciliation Mission Offering should be intentionally brought together as a way to encourage congregations to give expression to our core commitment as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the quest for Christian unity and to its manifestation in seeking God's justice, especially in relation to addressing the sin of racism, both in our church and in the world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly requests the Council on Christian Unity and the Reconciliation Mission Commission work together to produce appropriate worship resources and interpretative materials (biblical, theological, ethical and historical) for congregational use in promoting the Reconciliation Mission Offering and World Communion Sunday beginning in 2008.

Council on Christian Unity  
Reconciliation Mission Commission

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly  
ADOPT Business Item No. 0719. (Debate time 12 minutes).