

NO. 0736
(OPERATIONAL POLICY AND ORGANIZATION ITEM)
ACCEPTING DISCIPLES CARE NETWORK AS A “RECOGNIZED
ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH”

Background

Kirk Alliman and Bill Schiphorst, Christian Care Communities of Kentucky, hosted a meeting at the 2005 General Assembly in Portland to explore what interest exists for some kind of organization among social and health services care providers within the Christian Church. There was sufficient interest to schedule a meeting at the Disciples Development Conference in Tampa, January 2006, where 20 persons encouraged the formation of Disciples Care Network. Interested parties met again in January 2007 at the Disciples Development Conference in Tucson and formalized the steps to organize the Network and pursue recognition of the General Church. NBA has provided encouragement and initial seed money with no strings attached for the organizational phase of the Network.

A Steering Committee, composed of Kay Ellis, Chair, Sue Cherney, Bob Cooper, David Lundeen and Sue Ellen Trout were empowered to hire a consultant to help with this organizational phase and coordinate Disciples Care Network presence at the General Assembly in Ft. Worth. Don Brewer was employed by the Steering Committee to work through August 2007.

WHEREAS, Disciples Care Network, is “...**devoted to good works and acts of charity.**” Acts 9:36; and

WHEREAS, Disciples Care Network is a group of human service agencies in covenant with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). From an initial meeting of eighteen care providers at the Portland General Assembly in 2005, DCN has grown to 82 agencies with 224 ministry sites providing care for more than 37,000 persons annually in 27 states. More than 2900 individuals are employed by these agencies with cumulative annual budgets of \$156,800,000; and

WHEREAS, abandoned babies, abused, neglected and at risk children, youth in turmoil, persons with development disabilities and acquired brain injury, parents in need of language, family life and job training, older adults seeking retirement living, assisted living, nursing care, community-based day programs, hospice care and many others are cared for every day by some DCN agency; and

WHEREAS, the purposes of the Disciples Care Network are to:

- ❖ Increase awareness and encourage celebration among Disciples of the significant compassionate care being provided.
- ❖ Help shape the future direction of social and health care services among Disciples.

- ❖ Call ourselves, as leaders and organizations, to life and responsibility with accountability.
- ❖ Be a team member in discussing and determining the reorganization of Disciples structure for ministry.
- ❖ Encourage members of our Church to act as catalysts in the formation of new ministries of care to meet needs.
- ❖ Provide congregations, regions, DCN agencies and groups of churches collegial consultation when considering programs to address unmet needs.
- ❖ Provide support, consultation and improve communication among Disciples Care Network.
- ❖ Provide Disciples throughout the US and Canada opportunities to support Disciples Care Network and its ministries; and

WHEREAS, there is a great gap in understanding the extent of Disciples related social and health services. Many of these ministries are known only in their immediate area. While some agencies may have been started by Disciples and continue to have Disciples members on their boards, many of these agencies feel distanced from the church. Disciples Care Network (DCN) envisions that by increasing understanding of the variety and scope of these ministries the whole church can celebrate our collective ministries to improve the lives and welfare of those with various needs; and

WHEREAS, our denomination has justifiable basis to celebrate and claim the many and diverse benevolent, social and health ministries being conducted on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and in the name of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS as congregations, clusters of congregations, regions, etc., identify needs Disciples Care Network members and affiliates will be available to support and guide their leadership from dream to reality; and

WHEREAS, current program staff members are encouraged with the prospect of support and consultation from other DCN agencies. Some larger agencies have offered to make available to smaller agencies some of the expertise of their staff. For instance, one agency is willing to volunteer its Human Resources Department to be available to staff in smaller units with personnel issues; and

WHEREAS, Disciples Home Missions is lifting up Disciples Care Network to the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for approval as a Recognized Organization of said body, and Disciples Care Network will report to the General Board and General Assembly through Disciples Home Missions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, July 21-25, 2007, accepts Disciples Care Network as a Recognized Organization of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Disciples Home Missions

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 0736. (Debate time 12 minutes).