

Title: Adoption of Amendments to the Pension Plan of the Pension Fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Origin: The Board of Directors of the Pension Fund

Background Information:

The Pension Plan of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) functions in accordance with a Plan Document. On November 14, 2008, the Board of Directors of the Pension Fund of the Christian Church adopted technical revisions to the plan document intended to clarify in the design certain administrative practices related to the Plan. These revisions are included in the plan document known as *Pension Plan of the Pension Fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), restated effective January 1, 2009*.

Adoption of the revised Pension Plan Document addresses two matters of definition. First is the definition of retirement and the second the definition of spouse.

Historically, the Pension Plan was created in 1931 as an age retirement benefit plan, meaning that eligibility for full benefits would occur when one reached age 65 and qualification to receive benefits occurred when one actually retired from ministry or church employment. Over the years, the latter issue has been blurred by persons serving in an interim ministries or when the needs of a small struggling congregation requested a waiver of the retirement requirement so as to retain a pastor while reducing compensation or employee benefits. So that the Pension Fund may administer the program equitably for all participants, the definition of retirement has been added and will be consistently enforced prospectively.

Again when the Pension Plan was established in 1931, the benefits afforded through a joint and survivor pension program covering a pastor and their spouse was commonly understood. This has been the basis for providing retirement and related benefits for more than 75 years. Today, the legal understanding of the term spouse is not consistently applied among the states and is the source of much conflict and debate. The Pension Fund board believes that its fiduciary responsibilities dictate that benefits be applied consistently in accordance with historic practices until such time as the disparity of law and interpretation among states has been removed. Thus, the plan design has been amended to define spouse in accordance with Federal statutes in the belief that this may afford the best avenue for bringing consistency of rights and privileges in a spirit of equality and justice.

The Board of Directors of the Pension Fund requests that the General Board approve the revisions to the Pension Plan as restated effective January 1, 2009.

Recommended Action:

That the General Board, in keeping with paragraph 55 of The Design, confirms and ratifies the *Pension Plan of the Pension Fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, as restated effective January 1, 2009.