No. 9335

(Sense-of-the-Assembly Resolution)

RESOLUTION CONCERNING SYSTEMIC HEALTH CARE REFORM

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) historically has expressed its concern for the health and well-being of the people of the United States and Canada. The current priority of the church, adopted by the General Assembly in 1987 calls for developing vital congregations as dynamic faith communities in prophetic, redemptive and reconciling ministries to the whole world. Among the Biblical images identified for such congregations was the image of a healing community, recalling that the story of the dynamic new church that emerged after Pentecost is set in sequence with Peter and John healing the lame man and other stories of the healing community. Evidence of claiming that image would be "congregations concerned about the wholeness and health of our people, which work for a world of mercy and justice in which the reconciling wholeness of God's shalom is a reality for all people." (Resolution No. 8730)

A Task Force on Health Care, appointed by action of the General Assembly in 1985 (No. 8536), conducted a four-year study and made reports to the General Assembly on "Reclaiming the Health Ministry of the Church" in 1987 (No. 8764) and 1989 (No. 8937). The Task Force in its recommendations called for the congregational, regional and general manifestations of the church to join with ecumenical partners in witness and advocacy, including addressing national legislative and policy concerns.

Earlier the General Assembly had addressed the issue of national health care, calling in 1971 for the church to "take responsibility to aid in the creation of a national health care system" available to all and financed by employers, employees and general revenues. (No. 7136) In 1977 a resolution before the General Assembly called specifically for legislation by the United States Congress to provide "a national health care system which will assure quality care at controlled cost, that is universal and comprehensive in its application; and which is available to all persons on the basis of need." (No. 7721)

The resolution, which was narrowly defeated, pointed out that in the United States health care costs had increased from $12.1 billion in 1950 to $139 billion in 1976.

A national health care system has been developed in Canada which appears to be accessible, equitable and affordable. However, in the United States health care has become increasingly inequitable and costly. Health care spending was $638 billion in 1992 and is expected to exceed $920 billion in 1993. The 1992 spending rate amounts to $3,400 per person, enough to provide all medically necessary care, including long term care, without co-payments or deductibles. Yet 37,000,000 people are without any health insurance, a figure which is increasing by 100,000 every month. Tens of millions more have significant holes in their health care coverage and less than five percent of the population is covered against very expensive health problems and long term care.

Bills introduced in the United States Congress on health insurance reform or managed competition have major holes in coverage. Such bills, as well as employer mandate bills, have significant financial barriers in the form of co-payments and deductibles. As the new United States administration is undertaking its effort to reform the health care system, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is presented a fresh opportunity to intensify its 1971 resolve "to take responsibility to aid in the creation of a national health care system."
WHEREAS our Biblical faith calls us to a ministry of healing and concern for the wholeness and health of all people; and

WHEREAS, the Preamble to The Design declares “In Christ’s name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to all people;” and

WHEREAS, we believe that the health care crisis in the United States threatens both the well being of its people and the stability of its economy;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, July 15-20, 1993:

1. Affirm its support for access to all medically necessary care for everyone living in the United States, as well as in Canada;

2. Declare its support for a comprehensive package of health care benefits, available to all persons, that includes:
   a. health enhancement through education, health promotion, and preventive care including immunization, prenatal care, and early screening-diagnosis-treatment;
   b. primary and acute care by medical and para-medical professionals in offices, outpatient services, clinics and hospitals;
   c. extended care and rehabilitative services at home and in institutions;
   d. programs of mental health and treatment of mental illness that enhance the ability to function in society;

3. Express its concern that cost containment, necessary to provide universal access to comprehensive benefits, be sought through cutting administrative costs, simplifying the processes for gathering funds and payment of providers, and through setting a single national budget for health care, if necessary;

4. Recommend that the administration and Congress develop a plan for financing health care that includes contributions from corporations and individuals based on ability to pay, general revenues and, if necessary, taxes on products and manufacturing methods that damage health;

5. Express its conviction that to the extent possible, those who need health care services should have a choice of providers and participate in the decisions concerning services to be received.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Assembly request the General Minister and President to communicate this action to the President and the Congress of the United States and for information to the Prime Minister of Canada; that it call upon individuals, congregations, regions and general units to communicate their advocacy and support for legislation consistent with this action to the President and the Congress of the United States; and that it call upon the appropriate general units to continue their efforts with other religious groups in the Interreligious Health Care Access Campaign for systemic health care reform.