ADOPTED

No. 9525

(Operational Business Item)

ESTABLISHING NEW AFRICAN AMERICAN CONGREGATIONS

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Introduction

Resolution 7569, "Concerning the Establishment of New Congregations," called for "...establishing new congregations in the United States and Canada, especially among the Blacks and Hispanics...." The impetus for this resolution was an initiative by the Board of Trustees of the National Convocation to address the failure of the Christian Church to be active in the establishment of new African American congregations.

The Church Advance Now program of the 80's was launched with a goal of establishing 100 new congregations. Thirty percent of those new congregations were to have been predominantly racially ethnic, with fifteen percent African American. There were 119 new congregation starts in the 1980's. Fifteen of the 119 new congregations starts, or eleven percent, were predominantly African American congregations, five (4%) being region-initiated. Of the 104 other new congregations, twenty-seven (26%) were region-initiated.

Sixty new congregations have been started in the 1990's. Fifteen congregations have been region-initiated in this decade. Only five of the sixty are predominantly African American with none of these new starts being region-initiated. The Church Advance Now staff is presently in conversation with two regions regarding the start of new African American congregations. The board agreed with the CAN staff that this information is both startling and sobering, particularly for a church that professes so adamantly its commitment to being an inclusive church.

The Church Advance Now staff called an African American Summit on October 8-9, 1993 to share their insights and discuss the future of the New Congregation Establishment program and its implications for African Americans. Participants in the summit were ministers, lay persons, church leaders and representatives from many of the 1980's and 1990's new church starts.

Recommendations with specific strategies growing out of the summit were addressed to regions/areas and general units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). To date, there has been limited response. The recommendations were presented in 1994 to the Board of Trustees of the National Convocation for affirmation and advocacy. The board took action regarding the recommendations and requested that CAN staff continue to make contact with regions/areas in light of that affirmation and report to the Board on the staff's progress. CAN staff reported to the 1995 meeting of the Board of Trustees of the National Convocation the lack of support for the establishment of predominantly African American new congregations.
Resolution

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the National Convocation in the late 1960's and early 1970's, in its effort to encourage the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to start more African American congregations, was the impetus for the current New Congregation Establishment program; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of the National Convocation is saddened and deeply concerned that regions/areas of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) started (with some degree of success) only five new African American congregations in twenty-five years; and,

WHEREAS, the African American Summit report called on the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to be more proactive in the start of more African American congregations within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and,

WHEREAS, the National Convocation's Board of Trustees has voted to become more proactive in the establishment of new African American congregations; and,

WHEREAS, the Church Advance Now staff has identified Possible Target Areas through demographic studies and in consultation with regions/areas of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)--areas with strong potential for new African American congregation development;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) calls upon the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 20-24, 1995, to reaffirm its commitment to total inclusivity and full partnership with African American Disciples;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada establish at least one new African American community of faith each biennium;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly call upon Church Advance Now (CAN), in cooperation with those regions/areas identified by CAN staff as Possible Target Areas, to initiate a new African American congregation establishment process within the next biennium.