

NO. 0725
(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)
PROACTIVE PREVENTION: SEEKING COMMON GROUND
ON THE ISSUE OF ABORTION

WHEREAS, debates over abortion often reflect the division of North American society and of the contemporary church; and

WHEREAS, such debates often fail to address the root causes of abortion; and

WHEREAS, experience shows that it is possible to reduce the number of abortions, while still affirming a woman's privilege to responsibly exercise her inherent freedom of conscience, through programs that provide better health care and community support for women during pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, proactive prevention seeks to find common ground on the issue of abortion by focusing on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and by supporting pregnant women rather than focusing on the divisive and polarizing debates between pro-choice and pro-life advocates;¹ and

WHEREAS, Christians are called to seek reconciliation within the church whenever possible in order that the church might model reconciliation to the wider society (2 Corinthians 5: 18-19); and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is particularly called in our Mission Imperative statement "to engage in ministries of reconciliation, compassion, unity and justice"² (Ephesians 4:1-3); and

WHEREAS, debates are often marked by caricature and, thus, fail to acknowledge that all Christians affirm the sanctity of life and the dignity of women;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Ft. Worth, Texas, July 21-25, 2007, encourage all manifestations of the church to participate in proactive prevention by:

1. Repenting of the sin of vilifying one another based on our opinions on divisive topics such as abortion or of using such opinions as tests of Christian fellowship or faith.³ (Ephesians 4: 31-32)
2. Engaging in age appropriate health and sexuality education paired with Christian spirituality for adults and youth .⁴
3. Facilitating education for men as to their responsibilities in sexual relationships to ensure the safety and dignity of women and children.

4. Supporting shelters for women and children in crisis pregnancy situations.⁵
5. Supporting women who have had abortions, or who face difficult decisions regarding pregnancy, by providing our churches as sanctuaries offering healing pastoral and congregational care through compassionate listening and the embodiment of God's gracious presence. (Psalm 46 and 116)
6. Advocating for pregnancy counseling and adequate healthcare for women and families.
7. Advocating for and/or creating affordable daycare facilities in underserved neighborhoods, college campuses and other areas where children and families, have the greatest need.
8. Being an available resource for others by embodying and offering "proactive prevention" as an alternative perspective and model of mission regarding abortion.
10. Witnessing from our doorsteps "to the ends of the earth", to the power of God's reconciling and renewing Spirit in the midst of divisive and polarizing issues confronting God's world. (Acts 1:8).

NOTES:

1. We list General Assembly Resolution No. 7332 as our precedent. Approved October 1973, NO. 7322 resolved the following:

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting at Cincinnati, Ohio, October 26-31, 1973, strongly encourages individual congregations to give disciplined study to the matter of abortion, calling upon ethical resources of all God's people, contemporary and historical, and upon those disciplines which bear upon it, such as medicine, psychology, and laws.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that persons who must decide whether or not to undergo an abortion shall have the informed supportive resources of the Christian community to help them make responsible choices, and that congregations and individuals give continued full support to each person who must make such a decision, knowing that whether or not an abortion is decided the person will need the supportive assurance of God's grace and love which meaningfully can come with the Christian community."

General Assembly Resolution No. 24, approved August 1975, resolved the following:

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting at San Antonio, Texas, August 15-20, 1975.

- Affirm the principle of individual liberty, freedom of individual conscience, and sacredness of life for all persons.

- Respect differences in religious beliefs concerning abortion and oppose, in accord with the principle of religious liberty, any attempt to legislate a specific religious opinion or belief concerning abortion upon all Americans,
- Provide through ministry of the local congregation, pastoral concern, and nurture of persons faced with the responsibility and trauma surrounding undesired pregnancy.”

2. Mission Imperative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) adopted July 2000.

3. In the “Declaration and Address” of the “Christian Association of Washington” of 1809, Thomas Campbell expresses the following: "Moreover, being well aware, as from sad experience, of the heinous nature and pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians; tired and sick of the bitter jarrings and janglings of a party spirit, we would desire to be at rest; and were it possible, we would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren [sisters and brothers] throughout all the churches; as would restore unity, peace, and purity to the whole Church of God."

4. Our Whole Lives & Sexuality and Our Faith are two interrelated curriculum prepared in part by our ecumenical partner the UCC to address this need. Training for the curriculum is required. Information about this program can be found on the United Church of Christ website at <http://www.ucc.org/justice/owl/> or by calling 216-736-3718.

5. For more information about the NBA’s Olive Branch call (314) 381-3100. A wish list of items which congregations can supply to Olive Branch can be found on the NBA website at <http://www.nbacares.org/>

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES: (New Revised Standard Version)

Matthew 12: 25 – “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand”

2 Corinthians 5: 18-19 – “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.”

Ephesians 4: 1-3 – “I...beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all

humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to

maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Ephesians 4: 31-32 – “Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

Luke 4: 18 – “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...”

Psalms 46 - “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble...ff.”

Psalms 116 – “I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications...ff.”

Acts 1: 8 – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my

witnesses to the ends of the earth”

Compton Heights Christian Church, St. Louis, MO

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 0725. (Debate time 12 minutes).