

**Resolution on the Issue of Sexual Orientation  
With Regard to Ordination, Licensing/Commissioning, and Standing  
in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana**

**Whereas**, holy scripture affirms that all people have worth and are created in the image of God, and Jesus demonstrated God's reconciling love for us by calling all persons into relationship with Jesus without distinction; and

**Whereas**, the church is a praying community, holding dear even those with whom they may disagree, and the church from its beginning has discovered that God's Spirit leads congregations to differing interpretations of scripture yet each are called to claim one another in unity transcending those differences; and

**Whereas**, the founders of our movement, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and Barton W. Stone, believed more strongly in the importance of bearing witness to the unity that Christ provides by linking their lives in one church despite differing significantly on their interpretation of scripture concerning theologically divisive issues, their understanding of ministry, and their positions on important social and moral issues of their time; and

**Whereas**, the General Assembly in 2009 approved the *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*<sup>1</sup> which became the policy guiding the order of ministry in our church on August 1, 2011; and

**Whereas**, that policy states, "God calls all persons to receive the good news of the Gospel and accept their call to be God's people. The ministry of Christ is entrusted to all the people of God ... and they are called to servant ministry lived out in covenant community," and does not include sexual orientation as a criterion for ordination, licensing/commissioning, or standing; and

**Whereas**, a 1978 Regional Board resolution that prohibits the ordination, licensing, and standing of "practicing homosexuals" discourages openness and honesty in the Region's process of certifying candidates for ministry and consequently inhibits congregations from having the opportunity to consider calling gay and lesbian persons as their pastors; and

**Whereas**, this Regional policy and its implementation have led and continue to lead to confusion and discord within the membership of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana; and

**Whereas**, in the Preamble of the *Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, we profess that "this church expresses itself in covenantal relationships in congregations, Regions, and General ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), bound by God's covenant of love. Each expression is characterized by its integrity, self-governance, authority, rights, and responsibilities, yet they relate to each other in a covenantal manner, to the end that all expressions will seek God's will and be faithful to God's mission;" and

**Whereas**, a report to the October 2010 Regional Assembly on the Discernment Process on the Participation of Gays and Lesbians in the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana<sup>2</sup> revealed that there continues to be a diversity of perspectives regarding the issue of sexual orientation which should be acknowledged and honored; and

**Whereas**, the covenantal relationships of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana should encourage us to strive to enhance the "integrity, self-governance, authority, rights and responsibilities"<sup>3</sup> of all congregations and the Regional expression; and

**Whereas**, as part of this covenantal relationship<sup>2</sup>, we believe that local congregations in partnership with the Regional Commission on Ministry and its Nurture and Certification teams are best equipped to determine who is qualified to give ordained and licensed/commissioned leadership in the life of the church, and that the list of qualifications identified in *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*<sup>4</sup> is sufficient for that discernment;

**Therefore, be it resolved,** that the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana, meeting in Indianapolis September 29, 2012, affirms the criteria for ordination, licensing/commissioning, and standing as specified in *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, which does not include sexual orientation; and

**Be it further resolved,** that the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana instruct the Regional Commission on Ministry to revise its existing criteria to exclude sexual orientation as a criterion for ordination, licensing/commissioning, and standing. This act will supersede the *Statement on Homosexuality* approved by the Regional Board on June 13, 1978 and amended on August 23, 1988; and

**Be it finally resolved,** that the Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana affirms that this act will not require any congregation to call particular individuals to be their pastors, but rather will have the effect of 1) clarifying the policy and practice of the Region regarding the ordination, licensing/commissioning, and standing of persons who are openly gay or lesbian, 2) enhancing transparency, honesty, and openness in the process of certifying candidates for ministry, and 3) recognizing the authority and strengthening the opportunity of each congregation to choose pastors who are appropriate for their particular ministry setting as of June 25, 2012

Co-sponsors:

Board, Elders, and Congregation, Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN

Board and Elders, Central Christian Church, Terre Haute, IN

Congregation and Elders, Southside Christian Church, South Bend, IN

Church Council, Central Christian Church, Elkhart, IN

Elders, Central Christian Church, Anderson, IN

Board and Elders, First Christian Church, Fort Wayne, IN

<sup>1</sup>GA Resolution 0922: <http://www.disciples.org/Portals/0/PDF/TFPCOM/TFPCOM-Final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>2010 Regional Assembly Report: <http://indianadisciples.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/12/Discernment-Process-Report-2010-Regional-Assembly.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 2 of *The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*:  
<http://www.disciples.org/aboutthedisciples/thedesignofthechristianchurch/tabid/228/default.aspx>

<sup>4</sup>Lines 526-557, GA Resolution 0922, *Theological Foundations and Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*:

## “II. Policies and Criteria For The Ordering Of Ministry

### A. Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

1. *The Order of Ministry*. The Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) comprises Commissioned Ministers and Ordained Ministers.
2. *Personal Qualifications for the Order of Ministry*. The church expects to find within the women and men it receives into the order of ministry:
  - a. Faith in Jesus Christ, commitment to a life of Christian discipleship and nurturing spiritual practices;
  - b. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church;
  - c. An understanding of pastoral identity;
  - d. Capacity to engage in theological reflection;
  - e. Strong moral character and personal integrity;
  - f. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry;
  - g. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills;
  - h. Responsible personal financial management;
  - i. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God’s gifts;
  - j. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry.”