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REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE STYLE AND ECOLOGY

RECEIVED by the General Assembly

The Task Force on Christian Life Style and Ecology was created by action of the Administrative Committee of the General Board in response to action of the General Assembly in 1977 (Resolution No. 7754). The Administrative Committee sought the cooperation of the Division of Homeland Ministries in formation and administration of this Task Force. The task force has understood its responsibilities to lie in three areas:

1. To develop a rationale for the church's involvement in ecological issues.
2. To raise the consciousness and the conscience of the membership of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with regard to ecological issues.
3. To make programmatic suggestions to individuals, congregations, institutions, and units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The task force immediately recognized the breadth and the complexity of issues which can be termed "ecological."

What are the benefits and risks of genetic engineering? Can nuclear wastes be stored safely? How serious is the problem of acid rain? Which are the best possibilities for alternative energy sources? Are the economics of the industrialized nations entering a phase of no-growth? Will it be necessary to adopt a less consumer-oriented life style? Does coal conversion lead to the "greenhouse effect?" How can Christians be motivated to see ecological issues as a central concern of the Christian faith?

The task force began its work by developing a theological stance paper. Written by William M. Spangler, pastor of Mentor Christian Church, Mentor, Ohio and a member of the task force, this "Theology of Ecology" was distributed in an abbreviated form to all congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The complete paper was sent to all Disciple colleges and seminaries for possible classroom use.

The task force early recognized the confusion of church members faced with making decision on ecological questions when the "experts" sharply differ. Is nuclear energy safe? What are the present dangers from dioxin poisoning? A short paper prepared by Gary Swanson, professor of physics, Auburn University, entitled "When the Experts Differ" was sent to all congregations.

Seeking to increase awareness of the ethical aspects of ecological questions, the task force issued a litany for use on Earth Day, 1980. Prepared by Raymond Lambert, pastor of First Christian Church, Torrance, California, the litany was sent to all congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and was also widely distributed through secular channels.

The task force anticipates presenting to the 1983 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) a comprehensive set of programmatic recommendations for units, institutions, congregations and members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These program suggestions will be based on three fundamental assumptions which have emerged from the thinking of the task force:

1. Ecological issues are, at heart, faith issues. The doctrines of creation, incarnation, and stewardship point to visions and values which Christians must employ in the solution of ecological problems.
2. Ecological issues have been and will continue to be matters of urgent concern. "Emerging crises" is not too strong a term. Critical personal and societal decisions cannot be long postponed.
3. The consumer-oriented life style which characterizes most members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) must be changed. It is increasingly clear that such a life style not only has a negative impact upon the consumer, but also denies the basic necessities of life to the poor and the powerless of the world.

As the Task Force on Christian Life Style and Ecology continues its work on program recommendations for the church, it solicits suggestions and ideas from members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).