

(Operational Business Item)

GUIDELINES FOR THE ECUMENICAL SHARING OF RESOURCES

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

In October 1987, in El Escorial, Spain, the World Council of Churches brought 250 people together from all parts of the world "to formulate a discipline of ecumenical sharing and to foster a process of commitment to such a discipline." Three Disciples were present at Escorial. John Humbert was the official Disciple delegate, Larry Tankersley represented Church World Service of the National Council of Churches, and William Nottingham was there as an interpreter.

The Guidelines for Sharing of Resources developed in the conference were subsequently adopted by the plenary body of the World Council of Churches, and forwarded to the member churches for consideration, with the hope that they would be adopted as guidelines for their life and work. The guidelines are as follows:

Having confidence in the grace of God in Jesus Christ, who along with the Holy Spirit enables us to live in obedience to the divine will, we, the participants in the world consultation on resource-sharing, coming from different regions, commit ourselves to a common discipline of sharing among all God's people.

In all such sharing we commit ourselves:

1. To a fundamentally new value system based on justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It will be a system that recognizes the rich resources of human communities, their cultural and spiritual contributions and the wealth of nature. It will be radically different from the value system on which the present economic and political orders are based and which lies behind the current crises like those of nuclear threat and industrial pollution.

2. To a new understanding of sharing in which those who have been marginalized by reason of sex, age, economic and political condition, ethnic origin and disability, and those who are homeless, refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants take their place at the centre of all decisions and actions as equal partners.

This means, for example, that:

- churches, councils and networks will establish for this purpose ecumenical mechanisms both nationally and regionally; and
- equitable representation will be provided for women and youth in decision-making structures.

3. To identify with the poor and oppressed and their organized movements in the struggle for justice and human dignity in church and society. This in turn will imply the refusal to participate, either as giver or receiver, in ways of sharing that undermine this struggle.

4. To bear witness to the mission of God by identifying, exposing and confronting at all levels the root causes, and the structures, of injustice which lead to the exploitation of the wealth and people of the third world and result in poverty and the destruction of creation. This entails working for a new economic and political order.

This would mean, for example, that the churches of the North and the South commit themselves to strengthen and participate in the various anti-nuclear movements and to bring pressure upon their governments to stop nuclear testing and the dumping of nuclear waste. It will also mean joining with the people in their struggle against transnational corporations, militarism and foreign intervention and occupation.

5. To enable people to organize themselves and realize their potential and power as individuals and communities, working towards the kind of self-reliance and self-determination which are an essential condition of interdependence.

6. To be open to one another as friends on the basis of common commitment, mutual trust, confession and forgiveness, keeping one another informed of all plans and programmes and submitting ourselves to mutual accountability and correction.

This implies, for example, the implementation of mutual accountability and participation in decision-making between the South and the North.

7. To represent to one another our needs and problems in relationships where there are no absolute donors, or absolute recipients, but all have needs to be met and gifts to give, and to work for the structural changes in the institutions of the North and the South which this calls for.

8. To promote through words and deeds the holistic mission of the church in obedience to God's liberating will. We are convinced that in responding only to certain parts of the mission we distort and disrupt mission as a whole.

9. To participate in the struggles of people for justice, and thereby overcome all barriers between different faiths and ideologies which today divide the human family.

This means, for example, churches in East and West making use of all opportunities to strengthen the process of detente and integrating the resources freed by this process for ecumenical sharing.

10. To resist international mechanisms (such as the International Monetary Fund/World Bank) which deprive the people of the South of their resources - transferring, for example, their hard-earned capital, which is more than the aid they receive, in payment of foreign debt, thereby putting them in a state of perpetual dependence - contributing instead to a fundamental and just redistribution of the wealth and resources of a country including the wealth of its churches.

11. To devise ways of shifting the power to set priorities and terms for the use of resources to those who are wrongfully denied both the resources and the power, such as movements for social justice.

This would imply that participation of the South in the decision-making must not only be on a consultative basis as it is practiced today.

12. To facilitate and encourage mutual involvement among the churches and people in the South who have common concerns, for example, through the sharing of human resources.

13. To promote and strengthen ecumenical sharing at all levels, national, regional and international.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the preceding "Guidelines for the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources" be received by the General Assembly and forwarded for guidance to the general units, regions, and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for the ecumenical sharing of resources around the world.

No. 9124

(Operational Business Item)

DECLARATION ON DISCIPLES OF CHRIST REFORMED RELATIONS

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Background Information:

In many countries (e.g., North India, Japan, the Philippines, South Africa, and Great Britain) Disciples of Christ and Reformed churches have come together in united churches; in other places (e.g., COCU in the U.S.) they are engaged in sincere conversations moving towards visible unity. These two traditions also are partners in mission at international, national, and local levels.

In March, 1987, an international dialogue was held in Birmingham, England, sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) and the worldwide Disciples