CONCERNING THE UNITED NATIONS’ PEACEKEEPING ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

APPROVED by the General Assembly as an emergency resolution.

WHEREAS the Christian faith is rooted in the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace; and
WHEREAS the fourth Middle East War in a quarter of a century commenced on October 6, 1973 between Israel and her Arab neighbors; and
WHEREAS the United Nations Security Council in Resolution No. 338 of October 22, 1973 urged a cease-fire in the area; and
WHEREAS the United States proposed and the Soviet Union and other members of the Security Council authorized a U.N. Peace Force made up of non-permanent members of the Council to police cease-fire arrangements in the Middle East; and
WHEREAS a cease-fire is an essential first step, the search for a just and lasting peace will not be meaningful unless the parties concerned and their big power sponsors are willing to seriously persist in a negotiating process that seeks to accommodate the views of the contending parties in the Middle East dispute; and
WHEREAS the United States and the Soviet Union are the major arms suppliers of the respective parties in the Middle East and the prevention of any new outbreak of large-scale hostilities will depend on their agreement to participate in an arms control and disarmament arrangement for the area monitored by neutral U.N. Observers; and
WHEREAS the latest war in the Middle East has resulted in social disorders and needs that call us to prayer and that require generous contributions of public and private agencies throughout the world.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting at Cincinnati, Ohio, October 26-31, 1973 commends the United Nations Security Council for its decision to deploy a peacekeeping force to police the cease-fire arrangements in the Middle East; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we approve the principle of a U.N. Peace Force made up of non-permanent members of the Security Council so as to avoid the introduction of Cold War tensions into the area; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage the United States and the Soviet Union to continue to work toward the reduction of the tensions in the area and contribute to a serious negotiating process by entering into a U.N.-monitored arms control and disarmament arrangement so that neither side to the dispute will be under the illusion that the aggravating issues that divide them can be resolved by the use of military force; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge the members of the United Nations to adequately finance the peacekeeping arrangement, provide relief and reconstruction assistance in the war-torn area, and that we as members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) agree to contribute through the Week of Compassion along with other private agencies to humanitarian relief in the area; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that as Christians living in Canada and the United States we urge our congregations to establish Middle East study groups so that, as citizens, we can thoughtfully participate in the decision-making process of our governments; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we request the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to inform the following of our action: the President of the United States and the U.S. Secretary of State; the Prime Minister of Canada and the Canadian foreign minister; and the U.N. Representatives serving on the Security Council of the United Nations; therefore we urge the members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to write to members of Congress to consider actions suggested in this resolution.
No. 8133

RESOLUTION CONCERNING A POLICY STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST
ADOPTED by the General Assembly

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Anaheim, California July 31-August 5, 1981 is deeply concerned about events in the Middle East because of our mandate to work for justice and peace in the world, and the Middle East exerts a special hold on our attention because it is the cradle of our faith, and of the two other great monotheistic religions, and events in the Middle East profoundly affect our national life, and

WHEREAS, the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America has unanimously approved a comprehensive Policy Statement examining Middle East issues from a Christian perspective, and

WHEREAS, the aforesaid Policy Statement affirms that "the Basic principle guiding relations between the churches of the Middle East and the churches of the United States of America is that the Middle East churches provide the essential witness to Christ in the Middle East," and tourism can promote an important link between peoples of different cultures and has the potential to promote understanding between peoples of different cultures, and every year thousands of Christians, including members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), undertake travel to the Holy Land, and such travel could provide Christians in the United States and Canada with better insight into the continuing witness of Middle East churches and into the concerns of our brothers and sisters in the area, and

WHEREAS, in a world where religious identification remains a powerful force, it is essential that inter-faith dialogue take place, and inter-faith dialogue promotes not only understanding of the religions of others but also of one's own religion, and the aforesaid Policy Statement urges that "people of different faiths seek new contacts, relationships and ways of working together;"

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Anaheim, California, July 31-August 5, 1981, affirm the Policy Statement on the Middle East of the National Council of Churches of Christ Governing Board, and commend it to the congregations, regions, and general administrative units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for guidance in addressing the problems of peace, reconciliation, and justice in the Middle East.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that pastors and lay members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) traveling in the Middle East be encouraged to include in their itineraries visits with Middle Eastern church representatives in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, and that the Department of the Middle East of the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) provide information about Disciples relationships in that area and suggest contacts with Christians in the Middle East who desire dialogue with North American Christians, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that local congregations, regions, and general units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) be encouraged to open dialogue with Jews and Muslims in their midst, and that the various manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) seek better understanding of Islam and Judaism through educational programs for all ages.

(Note: The text of the Middle East Policy Statement adopted by the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. on November 6, 1980, follows.)
RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE MIDDLE EAST ARMS RACE
ADOPTED by the General Assembly

INTRODUCTION
While the church has quite rightly focussed its attention on the nuclear arms race between the superpowers, another arms race, fueled by local antagonisms and superpower rivalries, is being carried on in the Middle East. Both arms races have their victims and their potential victors. The fact that the nuclear arms race could lead to the extinction of the human race should not blind us to the fact that the Middle East arms race has already taken a considerable human toll - thousands of dead in the Israeli-Arab conflict, thousands of dead in Lebanon, thousands of dead in the war between Iran and Iraq. As His Holiness Karekin II Co-Catholics of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Cilicia has put it, concern in the West about the potential victims of nuclear configuration is self-serving if it does not take into account the real victims of "little" conventional wars, or small-scale configurations such as we have witnessed in Lebanon.

Both the nuclear arms race and the Middle East arms race have their own internal logic - or illogic. But these arms races intersect at three crucial points. Both involve the superpowers in a preponderant way; a Middle East war involving highly destructive conventional weaponry could lead to a wider war between the superpowers; and the "logic" of the Middle East arms race suggests that its next stage is proliferation of nuclear weapons in the area. Indeed, it is likely that one state in the Middle East - Israel - already has nuclear weapons, and it is quite clear that other states - Iraq, Libya, Pakistan - are actively seeking such a capability. These points of intersection alone would suggest that the Middle East arms race deserves special attention.

BACKGROUND
In the years since the 1967 war between Israel and the Arab States the Middle East has become the most highly militarized region in the world. Between 1968 and 1977 the Middle East absorbed fully 40% of the world's arms imports. Of the top ten third-world arms importers between 1977 and 1980, eight were Middle Eastern countries. During the 1970's the United States accounted for roughly 48% of arms imports into the area; the Soviet Union 25%; Great Britain 7%; and France 6%.

One of the results of this extraordinary militarization has been that the Middle East has the highest per capita expenditure for arms of any region in the world. Although the Middle East is an area where there is great wealth - Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, it is also an area where there is considerable poverty - Egypt, Sudan, Syria. Thus the arms race has had a detrimental effect on the economy of particular countries and that of the region as a whole. Israel, for example, has suffered an annual inflation rate of 150%; Iran's arms binges were certainly one of the contributing factors to the Iranian revolution; the literacy rates, an indicator of government spending for social programs, vis-a-vis the military, are among the lowest in the world.

A. The superpowers. The two superpowers have their own rationales for feeding the arms race in the Middle East. For the Soviet Union the supply of weaponry to client states is a way of undermining U.S. influence in the area. The Soviet's major clients recently have been Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Until 1972 Egypt was a major importer of Soviet arms.

The United States, on the other hand, has been the major supplier of arms to Iran (until the Iranian revolution of 1979), Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel. Egypt has now replaced Iran as a major client for U.S. arms. The two major emphases of U.S. policy in the region have been support for Israel and the building of an anti-Soviet alliance among moderate Arab States.

The policies of both superpowers have led to some surprising inconsistencies, however, The Soviet Union, for example, has been forced to walk a tightrope between its clients Syria and Iraq, whose rivalry has almost become institutionalized. In addition the USSR has sought to improve its relationship with Iran, which in turn has been using its American-supplied weaponry in its war with Soviet-supplied Iraq.

Nor has the U.S. been able to avoid the implicit inconsistencies of its foreign policy goals. The anti-Soviet consensus of the moderate Arab states is clearly of secondary importance to the consensus of these states against the policies of the U.S. and, primarily, Israel. Thus the foreign policy goals of the superpowers are clouded and at times frustrated by local conflicts.

Finally, it should be pointed out that there is little empirical evidence to prove that the provision of military assistance leads to a closer alliance between supplier and recipient. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to the contrary. The Soviet Union's heavy involvement in Egypt was rewarded by eventual expulsion of Soviet advisors and a quick turn toward the West by President Sadat. The United States' three and one-half billion dollars worth of military imports to Iran between 1977 and 1980 is cited by many observers as a major contributing factor to the disarray in the Iranian economy before the shah's demise.

B. The danger of wider war. There have been five major wars between Israel and Arab states since the creation of Israel in 1947. Each of those wars has carried the threat of superpower involvement. Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 for example, brought it into confrontation with Syria, which had recently signed a mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union. In addition, King Hussein of Jordan has announced that he will seek a mutual assistance pact with the United States.
As mutual assistance agreements of this sort are concluded the danger of superpower involvement in local Middle East conflicts increases. Arms may not be at the root of these conflicts, but they become an important factor in the cycle of hate and violence. Suppliers are called upon to prove their fidelity by the provision of ever more sophisticated weaponry. Rivalry between the superpowers thus feeds and feeds on local conflicts with ever greater destructive potential.

Along with the interplay of superpower and local conflicts it is clear that both superpowers have important strategic and economic interests in the Middle East. The enunciation of the Carter Doctrine, which identified the Persian Gulf as a zone of American interest, has only underscored U.S. and Soviet postwar interests in the oil-producing states of the Middle East. Although the world oil market is in temporary decline because of the world-wide recession, the U.S. has a continuing interest in assuring a secure supply of oil from the Middle East. The current oil glut, indeed, may lead to a future oil crisis because Western nations have no incentive to develop alternative fuels. A sudden change in the status of Iran or other Persian Gulf states could lead to deadly confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

C. The Middle East as a nuclear zone. Israel's destruction of an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981 led to much worried speculation about the development of an "Islamic bomb." Whether or not it was Israel's intention to develop nuclear weapons before that raid, subsequent statements by Iraqi president Saddam Hussein have made it clear that Iraq now actively seeks nuclear capability. Similarly Pakistan, worried about its neighbor India, has worked toward a development of a nuclear capability which could become a part of the Middle East power equation.

Although Israel has never officially acknowledged having nuclear weapons, it is widely assumed that it does. It is well known that Israel's nuclear reactor at Dimona has the capability to produce fissionable plutonium. Israel has not permitted on-site inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, nor has it signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The conventional arms race, while not affecting directly the spread of nuclear weapons, has enhanced the nuclear danger nevertheless by providing Middle Eastern countries with sophisticated "delivery systems." In addition, any perceived imbalance in conventional armaments could lead a country to seek an "equalizer."

CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Christians in the United States are called to witness to the immorality and futility of the Middle East arms race. They are called to do so out of solidarity with Middle East Christians who have taken on the ministry of reconciliation; they are called to do so because their nation is one of the major arms suppliers to the Middle East. Although cluster bombs which maimed Lebanese and Palestinians were dropped from Israeli jets and fired by Israeli artillery, they bore American markings.

Similarly we need to witness to the Soviet Union our concern about its role in the Middle East arms race. Soviet weaponry has been used in attacks on Israeli villages; Soviet promises to supply Syria with even more sophisticated missiles and jets add to the danger of a wider Middle East War.

Above all, as Christians we must be concerned because of the human consequences of the Middle East arms race. The victims are so often the noncombatants - children and old people caught between the warring parties. These little wars are not little wars to the people victimized by them. They are a daily reality of death, pain and separation - the very antithesis of the gospel.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Middle East Arms race constitutes a major threat to regional and world peace; and

WHEREAS, this arms race has made the Middle East, arguably the most volatile region of the world, now the most heavily militarized region of the world, with the highest per capita expenditure for arms; and

WHEREAS, the United States and the Soviet Union are the major suppliers of destructive and sophisticated arms to Middle Eastern nations; and

WHEREAS, we are called to be in solidarity with Christians of the Middle East who seek to carry out the ministry of reconciliation;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in San Antonio, Texas, September 23-28, 1983, call upon the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to communicate to the leadership of the Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches of the Soviet Union, our concern about the threat the Middle East arms race poses to world peace and to propose that our churches join in a joint witness to our governments on this issue;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) urge the United States government to work towards a multilateral agreement among all arms-supplying nations to limit or freeze arms transfers to Middle Eastern countries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) convey to the Presidents of the Middle East Council of Churches deep sadness over the grievous loss of life caused by military conflicts in the area and our resolve to move our government toward a more positive role in the region.