



TOWARD A VISION OF GLOBAL MISSION: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Introduction

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, and the United Church of Christ (USA) share a long legacy of ecumenical commitment and a common vision of mission.

In 1989 the General Synod of the United Church of Christ and the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) each voted to affirm a strong sense of mission and unity, saying:

In partnership, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ fully claim the mission and make deliberate commitment to engage in mission together, wherever and whenever possible.

Resolution, "Ecumenical Partnership," 1989

Both churches affirm that the mission and unity to which they are called is to be seen as part of the whole body of Christ sharing in God's one mission in and for God's one world.

Building on more than twenty years of a growing cooperation in mission in overseas/world ministries, the Division of Overseas Ministries and the United Church Board for World Ministries* seeks to envision and enact one common mission in world/overseas mission/ministries.

The oneness of mission commitment which the two churches embrace in overseas/world ministries is documented in the fundamental policy statements found in *General Principles and Policies* of the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and *Mission and World Ministries - Guidelines for Mission and Mandate* of the United Church Board for World Ministries.

These documents affirm that God calls the church: to announce and proclaim the good news of God's kingdom of love through Jesus Christ in the world; to call humankind and all nations to repent and live with one another toward a new order of love, justice, and peace; sharing the responsibility to participate in the struggle for justice and human dignity; to denounce all that hinders wholeness and to seek to embody God's love for all people, living and serving in solidarity with the world's hungry, homeless, and oppressed peoples; seeking to help provide by witness, service, and advocacy the reality of hope and love; to care for and use the resources of the planet that all humankind may have access to justice, healing, and wholeness of life.

These common affirmations of mission rooted in the history of the two churches' mission/ministries for overseas/world programming have served as a basis for developing guiding principles for the shaping of a common vision for mission in the 1990's moving into the 21st century.

The Common Vision

This vision and the *Guiding Principles* are the product of joint work by directors, staff and missionaries, and representatives of partner churches from outside the United States and Canada. The *Guiding Principles* emerge from a fundamental mission commitment

to a shared life in Christ and; to an ecumenical global sharing of resources and prophetic vision of a just and peaceful world order, joining with God's concern for the poor and oppressed.

It is our fervent hope that this commitment will be reflected in the creation of a common decision-making forum for mission program which will visibly witness to the oneness of mission in and through the Church of Jesus Christ.

Guiding Principles

1. Within covenantal bonds with other partner churches and ecumenical bodies throughout the world, we commit ourselves in Christ to share life, resources and needs.
2. As part of the ecumenical church and in response to particular historical and geographical contexts, we affirm our commitment to share persons in mission.
3. We commit ourselves to discovering and sharing exciting new ways to sing the song of faith . . . hearing, telling and participating in the story of God's love in Jesus Christ.
4. Relying upon God's grace, we commit ourselves to share in God's healing of God's continuing creation.
5. Recognizing the freedom of God's Spirit to act in diverse ways, we commit ourselves to engage in dialogue, witness and common cause with people of other faiths and movements with whom we share a vision of peace, justice and the integrity of creation.

In covenant with partner churches, we (DOM/UCBWM) affirm a shared life in Jesus Christ. Sharing life in partnership with other churches and ecumenical bodies is the cornerstone of our global life and witness. It is for the sake of Christian unity and mission that we join in covenant with others to witness to God's love in the world. We are learning to receive the story of God's love in Jesus Christ in refreshing new ways within the life of witness and service among partners around the world. Within the context of the sharing of resources, we are prepared to receive as well as to send persons in mission; persons committed to share in the healing of God's creation and to engage in dialogue, witness and common cause with people of other faiths and

movements. By identifying and articulating our own needs and available resources, our relationships with partners will become transparent and our common mission be enhanced.

We understand that all Christians are engaged in the missionary task of the church in a variety of contexts. People engaged in mission share God's love and build human community. The hearing, telling and participating in the story of God's love is part of the joyous task of the whole church. It is a story of God's reign of love, peace, and justice and the wholeness of creation. As Christians we share with people of other faiths and movements experiences of human struggle which contradict the principalities and powers of this world. We are together challenged to work for the transformation of oppressive governmental structures and policies and to confess that our own life styles have contributed to creating the gross inequity that exists in the availability and distribution of God's resources. Creation calls out for healing and redemption.

In such a world as this, local communities of faith have begun to experience the interconnectedness of God's world--a world desperately in need of healing. We seek such healing within the context of an increasing pluralism that tests our ability to welcome God's gift of diversity. We yearn for a wholeness of our ministry in Jesus Christ which will bring all of God's people together with imagination and creativity serving the one God who unites and reconciles us all.

*As of July 1, 2000, the United Church Board for World Ministries became the Wider Church Ministries.

(Final refinements on this document were made by the Joint Long Range Planning Committee in February 1993.)