

NO. 1120
(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has longstanding commitments ensuring the basic human rights of all persons¹; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking, also known as “trafficking in persons,” is a global, widespread and illegal practice which violates basic human rights, including the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights Article 4, and is against God’s intention for the human community found in scripture, e.g., in Isaiah 58:6 (NRSV), “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?;” Hebrews 13:3 (NRSV), “Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured;” Luke 4:18 (NRSV), “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free;” and

WHEREAS, human trafficking is the use of force, coercion, fraud or abduction to exploit the person for profit or service; and

WHEREAS, “victims of human trafficking are subjected to labor and/or sexual exploitation, which may take many forms including debt bondage, commercial sexual abuse of children, prostitution, pornography, bride trafficking, child soldiering, domestic servitude and forced labor”²; and

WHEREAS, human trafficking is the fastest-growing criminal industry in the world and is tied with arms dealing as the second largest worldwide criminal industry,³ generating approximately \$32 billion dollars annually⁴; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Department of State⁵, approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders, and up to 27 million adults and

¹ Sense-of-the-Assembly Resolutions: (2009) No. 0915, “Axis of Friendship;” (2007) No. 0728, “The Church’s Response to the War in Iraq;” (2005) No. 0520, “Promoting Peace for All in the Sudan;” (1999) No. 9913, “Calling for the Closure of the School of the Americas;” (1997) No. 9715, “Resolution of Police Accountability.”

² National Council of Churches. (2008). “Resolution on Human Trafficking,” <http://www.nccusa.org/NCCpolicies/humantrafficking.htm>.

³ UN High Commissioner for Refugees. (October 2010). <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4cb3f5172.html>.

⁴ Roger Plant, International Labour Organization. (2008). “ILO Experts to Highlight Critical Aspects of Human Trafficking at Vienna Forum” http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/portal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1203&Itemid=1318

⁵ United States Department of State. (June 2010). “Trafficking in Persons Report” <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/82902.pdf>

children worldwide are coerced into forced labor or other service, many in their own countries; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 14,500 - 17,500⁶ persons and an estimated 800 – 1200 persons⁷ are trafficked annually into United States and into Canada respectively, often in the communities where we live, work and worship; and

WHEREAS, women and children represent the largest percentage of those being trafficked worldwide⁸; and

WHEREAS, there are 244,000⁹ children and youth in the United States estimated to be at risk of child sexual exploitation; and

WHEREAS in the United States, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, (reauthorized in 2008), made human trafficking a Federal crime in the United States It was enacted to prevent human trafficking overseas, to protect victims and help them rebuild their lives in the U.S., and to prosecute traffickers of humans under Federal penalties¹⁰; and

WHEREAS, in Canada the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of 2001 was enacted which, in part, made Human Trafficking a criminal offence.¹¹

WHEREAS, the U.S. Senate Concurrent Resolution 40,¹² passed on June 22, 2007, supported the annual observance on January 11th of Human Trafficking Awareness Day to increase awareness of this global injustice; and

WHEREAS, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA has called upon its member communions to study and engage in advocacy on issues of human trafficking; and

WHEREAS, Disciples Women has had human trafficking as the ministry's advocacy priority as evidenced in ministries across the United States and Canada and at the 2010 Quadrennial Assembly, and will continue this advocacy priority for the current quadrennium; and

⁶ HumanTrafficking.org. http://humantrafficking.org/countries/united_states_of_america

⁷ April 2009 Report from ARPA Canada <http://arpacanada.ca/index.php/issuesresearch/religious-freedom/556-human-trafficking-modern-day-slavery-in-canada->

⁸ International Labour Organization. (2008). "ILO Experts to Highlight Critical Aspects of Human Trafficking at Vienna Forum"

http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/portal/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1203&Itemid=1318

⁹ Estes, Richard J. and Neil A Weiner. "The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the US, Canada, and Mexico." The University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work: 2001, Study funded by the Department of Justice.

¹⁰ US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/index.html>

¹¹ Department of Justice Canada, http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/I-2.5/page-4.html#anchorbo-ga:l_3-gb:s_117

¹² US Senate Concurrent Resolution 40, passed on June 22, 2007, supported the annual observance on January 11th of Human Trafficking Awareness Day (<http://www.nccusa.org/news/senateresontrafficking.html>).

WHEREAS, resources for education and advocacy regarding Human Trafficking are available through Disciples Women, Global Ministries, and other organizations¹³ ;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2011 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting July 9 – 13, 2011 in Nashville, Tennessee, declare its opposition to human trafficking; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) encourage its members, congregations and various expressions and manifestations to engage in education about the issue of trafficking in persons in our own communities and around the world, and in advocacy efforts to end this criminal and abusive practice; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that members, congregations and various expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) be encouraged to advocate for the ongoing funding and strengthening of the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000¹⁴ and to advocate and support the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of 2001 in Canada.

Office of Disciples Women

¹³ National Council of Churches in the USA's "Social Creed for the 21st Century" was approved at the NCC General Assembly on November 7, 2007 (<http://www.nccusa.org/news/ga2007.socialcreed.html>); "The Rescue and Restore Campaign," an initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Administration for Children and Families (ACF) which maintains a public awareness website to combat human trafficking and a referral hotline to connect victims with NGO's in their local area (Rescue & Restore Campaign website offers outreach kits to educate and assist health care providers, social service providers, and law enforcement officers in their efforts to identify and help victims of trafficking <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/index.html>), referral hotline: 1-888-373-7888; international bodies and campaigns of the United Nations along with other ecumenical and anti-trafficking networks, such as Not for Sale, the Polaris Project, and the Freedom Network, that seek to bring an end to human trafficking in the United States and abroad; and the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 last reauthorized in 2008 as the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h110-7311>) to provide trafficking victims-related appropriations for activities of (1) the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking; (2) the Secretary of Health and Human Services; (3) the Secretary of State; (4) the President; (5) the Secretary of Labor; (6) the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; (7) the Secretary of Homeland Security; and (8) the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development. This act provides funding through 2011 and is subject to further amendment and reauthorization.

¹⁴ The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 was last reauthorized in 2008 as the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h110-7311>) to provide trafficking victims-related appropriations for activities of (1) the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking; (2) the Secretary of Health and Human Services; (3) the Secretary of State; (4) the President; (5) the Secretary of Labor; (6) the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; (7) the Secretary of Homeland Security; and (8) the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development. It provides funding through 2011 and is subject to further amendment and reauthorization.

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 1120. (Discussion time 12 minutes)