

NO. 1123
(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)

SUPPORT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH
BY OPPOSING BULLYING IN SCHOOLS, THE CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY

WHEREAS, the Bible tells us that all people are created in God's image and are beloved children of God; and

WHEREAS, Jesus teaches that we are to love God by loving our neighbor; and

WHEREAS, the Church is called to seek justice for all people, especially to protect those who are most vulnerable; and

WHEREAS, the General Minister and President has declared a biennium goal focusing on ministry to, with, by and for children, youth and young adults; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has committed itself to care for children, providing a safe place for learning, growing and spiritual development including initiation of ministries such as Light a Candle for Children; and

WHEREAS, a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.ⁱ

WHEREAS, bullying in schools and in the community impacts all of God's children including those who participate in bullying, those who are victims of bullying and especially those who suffer such extreme emotional distress as a result of bullying that it leads to self injury, including suicide; and

WHEREAS, bullying happens because of many factors including, but not limited to, sexual orientation, immigration status, economic status, cognitive and physical ability, weight, race and culture; and

WHEREAS, social media, text messaging and other forms of digital media provide opportunities to engage in bullying outside the realm of personal contact, even allowing adults the ability to pose as children; and

WHEREAS, recently a number of children and teens have attempted or committed suicide as a result of bullying at school and in the community, including particularly among gay teens; and

WHEREAS, silence of the church in the face of bullying and of suicides brought on by bullying implies the giving of permission for such acts; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) claims the identity of being a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Nashville, Tennessee July 9 – 13, 2011, renew its support, love and ministry to, for, with and by all children, youth and young adults; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly denounces bullying as sinful and harmful; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls on congregations to work with local communities to address bullying and other forms of harassment, including educating children, youth, and adults about preventing, identifying and reporting bullying; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Disciples Home Missions continue to identify resources for congregations and regions on the matter of bullying; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls on regional ministries to address the issue of bullying within our camp and conference programs; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that this General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) instructs the General Minister and President to work with appropriate ministries of the church to support children and youth regardless of their sexual orientation, economic ability, immigration status, cognitive and physical abilities, weight, race or culture in order that all of God's children will experience the love of Jesus and wholeness in a fragmented world.

Office of General Minister and President
Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries
Central Rocky Mountain Region Camp and Conference Ministry
Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin
Christian Church of Northern California-Nevada
Disciples Home Missions
Disciples Peace Fellowship
GLAD Alliance
Reconciliation Ministries
Christian Church in Oklahoma
Christian Church in Kansas

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 1123. (Discussion time 12 minutes)

ⁱ Definition taken from Dan Olweus, creator of the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, from his book, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*