NO. 0728
(SENSE OF THE ASSEMBLY)
THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE WAR IN IRAQ
REVISED

WHEREAS, Jesus declared peacemakers "blessed" (Matthew 5:9) and scripture reminds us that Jesus lived nonviolently even while suffering, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps (1 Peter 2: 20-23) and, further, that scripture calls us to "live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18); and

WHEREAS, many of the earliest and most influential leaders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) taught war to be utterly at odds with Christian practice, among them Alexander Campbell, who taught, "War is not now, nor was it ever, a process of justice," and Barton Stone, who declared, "Nothing appears so repugnant to the kingdom of heaven as war;" and

WHEREAS, the war in Iraq is not only contrary to the views of Christian pacifism but also is at odds with the traditional standards of just war[1] at several points:

(1) A preventative war is not a just cause, regardless of whether there were weapons of mass destruction in the arsenal of pre-war Iraq.
(2) The war was not a last resort. Since the war was not a defensive war calling for immediate violent response, nonviolent efforts of resolution were still possible, and

WHEREAS, on the advice of the President of the United States of America, Congress authorized an attack on Iraq if certain conditions were not met, when the rightful authority charged to examine the veracity of accumulation of weapons of mass destruction is the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a body of the United Nations, and

WHEREAS, leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches, the Episcopal Church, and mainline Protestant churches in the United States have expressed opposition to the Iraq War and our global church and ecumenical partners have issued statements on the war declaring it to be immoral and contrary to the principles of "Just War;" and

WHEREAS, leaders of the church – for example, Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams – have expressed regret for not doing more to oppose the war in Iraq; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) witnesses to our inclusiveness by encouraging the lively and meaningful discussion of this, and all divisive issues, at every level of our denomination through honest dialogue in which a respect for the faithful viewpoints of others is expected as a matter of both conviction and conscience;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) gathered in Ft. Worth, Texas on July 21 – 25, 2007, after due reflection and a respectful discussion, go on record as conscientiously opposing the war in Iraq as an action inconsistent with the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, and a violation of the traditional standards of just war, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly reaffirm the following statement (included in the letter of February 18, 2006, from the U.S. Conference of the World Council of Churches addressed to the delegates at the WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil) that "*we lament with special anguish the war in Iraq, launched in deception and violating global norms of justice and human rights"* ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that although the General Assembly disagrees with the war in Iraq, we lift up the men and women of the armed forces who are stationed there for their courage and sacrifice and hold them and their families in our prayers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Minister and President inform Disciple chaplains within the armed services about the action taken by this General Assembly regarding the war so that they may prepare to provide this information to service members who seek to know the position of their church; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) affirms the God-given right of conscience and offers moral support to men and women who volunteered for military service but who, on the grounds of Christian conviction, refuse deployment to Iraq, realizing that this action may subject them to military discipline; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Minister and President be encouraged to write a pastoral letter to all congregations acknowledging the deep pain this war has caused our country and our church and promoting the ongoing discussion of this war from a theological viewpoint; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) be encouraged to institute for ministers with standing and students seeking ordination, education and training in the Christian tradition of "Just War" standards and pacifist perspectives; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Minister and President make the President and the Congress of the United States and the Prime Minister and Parliament of Canada aware of these actions to be taken by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), regardless of the decisions the US government chooses to make in relation to the war in Iraq.

Disciples Peace Fellowship

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly ADOPT Business Item No. 0728. (Debate time 24 minutes).

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[1] The *jus ad bellum*, criteria for entering into to warfare are:

1. There must be a just cause for entering into warfare. Essentially just cause is limited to self-defense or putting a stop to egregious and ongoing injustice.
2. The actions must be guided by right intentions. Right intention pertains to the reestablishment of peace and order, and not to intentions which lead to brutality, vengeance and humiliation for the enemy.
3. A war can be justifiable only when declared by a competent and recognized authority.
4. War can be engaged in only as a last resort. All other possible means of resolving the conflict must be exhausted before war can be considered justifiable.
5. There must be a high probability of success as far as can be determined. "Heroic" lost causes, however just, are not justifiable.

The reasonably anticipated good to be achieved by engaging in warfare must be proportionally greater than the destruction to persons, property and culture which will likely result as a consequence of war.

Just War Theory developed by Aristotle, Cicero and Augustine has been codified in the United Nations Charter, the Hague and the Geneva Conventions.