

NO. 0915

(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION)

**AXIS OF FRIENDSHIP
(With Revisions)**

WHEREAS, Jesus called people to live in accordance with the Great Commandment to love God and neighbor (Matt. 22:36-40), and exhorted his followers to love their enemies (Matt. 5: 44). When we love our enemies, we create the possibility of their becoming our friends. Jesus called his disciples his friends and urged them to risk everything for their friends (John 15:12-17); and

WHEREAS, Paul taught that we are to "...live peaceably with all..." (Romans 12:18) and to "...be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good..." (Romans 12:21) and in accord with what our biblical heritage teaches, we must find solutions that respect human rights and life, generate mutual respect and accountability, and lead to genuine peace in the face of dangerous situations and hostile governments; and

WHEREAS, the word "axis" has long been used to identify pivotal places and moments where the transformative and revelatory presence of sacred power touches life, such as a mountain, column of smoke or fire, steeple, minaret, pagoda, great tree, or person (e.g., axis mundi= turning point of the world)¹; and

WHEREAS, the September 11th tragedy in the United States brought an outpouring of sympathy from all over the world. Throughout Europe, churches on September 12 rang their bells as people held a minute of silence at noon. The world's sympathy came from places, as far off as Tehran, Iran, where thousands of Iranians lit candles and stood in silence in the streets of the city in solidarity with the people of the United States,² and

WHEREAS, this spontaneous goodwill still has potential to be a transformative power for interfaith and cross-cultural understanding throughout the world and among the diverse peoples of the United States and Canada, an important axis of friendship. Such friendship is a better and more lasting basis for both international cooperation against terrorism and diplomatic means for solving international conflicts **than the exploitation of mass-scale tragedies as justifications for belligerency, as is unfortunately the case by governments around the world;** and

WHEREAS, THE General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is concerned about situations of political and social unrest around the world which impact the daily lives of people in ways that have been harmful and have denied the fullness of life, including most recently:

- **In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where almost six million people have died in the past decade since the so-called end of the civil conflict over, in large measure, the scramble for minerals and natural resources;**
- **In Honduras, where on June 28, 2009, a military coup overthrew the democratically-elected government, leading to popular unrest and the violation of human rights;**
- **In Iran, where the June 12, 2009 elections have resulted in demonstrations and state crackdowns, fractious debate and expression, and death and injury for people seeking a new and fair political process;**
- **On the Korean Peninsula, where reunification is discussed, but where North Korean nuclear development is a serious regional and global obstacle to peace;**
- **In the Philippines, where the military continues with impunity its harassment and abuse of the people, who wish to live free from state oppression and to enjoy a lasting peace with prosperity;**
- **In Sri Lanka where, despite the end of civil war, more than 200,000 innocent civilians are confined by the government in detention camps in which their basic needs, the opportunity to return home and reunification with their families are denied;**

- **In the Republic of Zimbabwe, where threats to international security and basic human dignity are posed by the decline of economic, humanitarian, and human rights conditions resulting in untold suffering of the people;**

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 29-August 2, 2009, affirm its commitment to diplomacy for resolving conflicts and urges the governments of the United States and Canada to pursue the path of diplomacy and nonviolence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly expresses its solidarity with people around the world, especially now in the Congo, Honduras, Iran, the Korean Peninsula, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe, and continues to work for friendship with people – church and interfaith partners, and others – there and everywhere, in critical presence ministries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly encourages congregations to promote and work for an axis of friendship among the people of the United States and Canada and other countries, in specific by embracing opportunities for citizen exchanges offered by Global Ministries; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that this Assembly encourages congregations to celebrate and participate in Axis of Friendship Day by:

1. Encouraging all its members to light a candle for the Axis of Friendship in their windows on the evening of September 12 every year.
2. Holding special services of candle-lighting and peace in local churches.
3. Helping congregations celebrate the Axis of Friendship with festivals in their local areas, based in promoting interfaith and cross-cultural understanding among the many diverse nationalities, religions, and cultures found in our own neighborhoods.
4. Requesting the Common Global Ministries staff to inform all our global partners of this action and to explore with them possible similar commemoration(s).
5. Encouraging joint events and services that honor the Axis of Friendship with other important commemorations of cross-cultural friendship and peace, such as Light a Candle for Children.

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The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 0915. (Debate time: 12 minutes)