

**No. 9913**

**(Sense-of-Assembly)**

**CALLING FOR THE CLOSURE OF THE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS**

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Background: Sources of information include House Bill 732 currently before Congress, the Latin American Working Group of the National Council of Churches, and the School of Americas Watch of Washington, D.C.

WHEREAS, the gospel clearly calls Christians to work for peace and justice and Jesus Christ lived and died to bring God's shalom to this broken world; and

WHEREAS, the military leaders in the countries of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean have been responsible for many incidents of violence and human rights abuses, and many of these leaders have been trained by the United States military at the School of the Americas, which is now located at Fort Benning, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, the combat skills and low-intensity conflict taught at the School of the Americas are used to control and destroy grassroots movements for change; and

WHEREAS, graduates of the School of the Americas are responsible for numerous assassinations, "disappearances," torture, and mass terror, including (but by no means limited to):

in El Salvador the assassinations of Archbishop Oscar Romero (three of the four officers involved were trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas); the four North American religious workers (three of the five officers so trained); the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter (19 of the 26 officers so trained);

the mass murder campaign, called the "dirty war," in Argentina resulting in an estimated 30,000 murders and disappearances and tortures (the general in charge);

the mass murder campaign in Guatemala resulting in an estimated 200,000 murders and disappearances (the general in charge);

the "El Mazote" massacre in El Salvador in which the entire village of over 900 men, women, and children were exterminated by the Salvadoran

military (10 of the 12 officers in charge);

49 of the Salvadoran officers cited by the U.N. Human Rights Commission as principals in "death squad" activity;

military dictators known for human rights abuses internationally from Bolivia, Honduras, Ecuador, and Argentina; and

WHEREAS, the School of the America receives the entirety of its funding from the U.S. government; an estimated \$20 million is paid annually to operate the School on the grounds of Fort Benning, Georgia;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, October 8-12, 1999, call upon the United States government to:

1. eliminate any and all funding for the School of the Americas and close the school;
2. cease any further training of the military leaders from the countries of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean;
3. use the funds that have been spent on the School of the Americas to support - both in the U.S. and in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean - programs for women, children, the hungry, the homeless, and other victims of violence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly call on regions and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to pray and study the issue, and recommend that they call upon their representatives in Congress to support the actions listed above and that they send representatives of their regions and congregations to the vigil calling for the closure of the School of the Americas to be held at Fort Benning, Georgia, in November of 1999; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) send this resolution to the President of the United States, to the Secretary of Defense, to the leadership of the several Armed Forces and Appropriations committees in Congress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) send this resolution to the School of the Americas Watch and that he or his representative be present at the vigil calling for the closure of the School of the Americas to be held at Fort Benning, Georgia, in November of 1999.