

1979

RESOLUTION: HANDICAPPED PERSONS AND THE LIVES OF OUR CHURCHES

WHEREAS the vast majority of infants born in this country as well as the world are born without any form of handicap, and these "normal" individuals are accepted by society and lead normal and productive lives, and they are considered to be the equal of others, spiritually, socially, academically and vocationally and are free to choose a life style and activities; and

WHEREAS there are those who have not been as fortunate as others and were born with or have been afflicted with some type of handicap, whether it be physical or mental, whether it be mild or severe, and

WHEREAS these individuals have often suffered rejection and exclusion, stares and mockery' in our communities because of the lack of clear information and direct experience which has led to prejudice toward and lack of acceptance of handicapped individuals, and

WHEREAS in the past society has segregated handicapped individuals away from the mainstream and thus consideration has not been given to providing supportive environments for handicapped individuals to live independently or in groups within our communities, and

WHEREAS we are all imperfect human beings and we all have limits and strengths just as handicapped persons do, and -t is our responsibility and opportunity to strengthen and heal one another in the Christian Community and to recognize our ministry to, with and from handicapped persons, and

WHEREAS God has created us all with intrinsic inestimable worth, He does not measure our ability or productiveness in society, and

WHEREAS the cooperative project of the Mt. Carmel Congregational Church and Friendship Gate, Inc. to provide two residences for mildly retarded men and women, who live in a home atmosphere, conduct a normal living, participate in community endeavors, and feel they are a part of this community, can serve as a model for other churches,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Department of Church and Society assist the member churches in evaluating their own facilities and programs and availability within their local community of accessible church facilities and programs relative to the needs of the handicapped, the deaf, the hard of hearing, the retarded, the blind and those with emotional handicaps.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Department of Church and Society consider the needs of handicapped in sponsored housing projects currently underway or in planning and insure that the Federal guidelines that require 10% of subsidized elderly housing be allotted to handicapped individuals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Church and Society undertake to assist the member churches with their evaluation and attempts to find methods to meet the needs of the handicapped within the congregation and community.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the member churches be encouraged to undertake service programs to assist the handicapped in making smooth transitions from their parental homes or institutional backgrounds into living within the mainstream of the church and community, such as skill building groups, and how to cope with the problems of everyday living.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the member churches be urged to undertake programs of education both within the church and within the general community designed to remove the attitudinal barriers which are as handicapping as the physical disability itself and the Department of Church and Society be assigned the task of assisting in the development of such educational programs.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the member churches where possible be encouraged to undertake the study and support of legislation and other governmental and community efforts aimed at giving the handicapped the same freedom of choice which includes physical and program accessibility as the non-handicapped person may have.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the member churches be encouraged to investigate the need for housing, including group homes, physically accessible apartments and private dwellings in the communities and to identify groups who are working to provide such housing and offer assistance if they are able.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that a Task Force of all Departments of the Conference be created to instruct and aid the member churches in their analysis and education regarding participation of handicapped persons in their life.