



**The United Church
of Canada
General Council**

GC27 Human Rights – The Disabled (1977H763)

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The Handicapped and the Wholeness of the Family of God

WHEREAS we believe that Christ died and rose for all and his church to be the sign for the coming unity of humankind, and that it must be open to women and men of every nation and culture, of every time and place, of every sort of ability and disability; in its mission, it must actively seek them wherever and whoever they are, and in its company they must find their true home; and

WHEREAS the church's unity includes both the disabled and the abled and a church seeks to be truly united within itself and moving toward unity with others must be open to all; yet able-bodied church members, both by their attitudes and by their emphasis on activism, marginalize and often exclude those with mental and physical disabilities; and

WHEREAS the disabled are treated as the weak to be served, rather than as fully committed, integral members of the body of Christ and the human family and the specific contribution which they have to give is ignored; and

WHEREAS this is the more serious because disability, a worldwide problem, is increasing; accidents and illness leave adults and children disabled; many more are emotionally handicapped by the pressures of social change and urban living; genetic disorders and famine leave millions of children physically and mentally impaired:

THEREFORE, we affirm that that church cannot exemplify "... the full humanity revealed in Christ..." bear witness to the interdependence of humankind, or achieve unity and diversity if it continues to acquiesce in the social isolation of disabled persons and to deny them full

participation in this life; and

WE AFFIRM that the unity of the family of God is handicapped where these brothers and sisters are treated as objects of condescending charity; it is broken where they are left out; and

WE TAKE SERIOUSLY questions such as, "How can the love of Christ create in us the will to discern and to work forcefully against the causes which distort and cripple the lives of so many of our fellow human beings?" and, "How can the church be open to the witness which Christ extends through them?"

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