WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, endeavors in both word and deed to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God;” and

WHEREAS, it is with profound sadness and righteous indignation that we mourn the lives of nine victims of gun violence fueled by racism, hate, and ignorance at “Mother” Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC, last month on Wednesday, June 17, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the names and ages of the Charleston Nine are Cynthia Hurd, 53 years old; Susie Jackson, 87; Ethel Lance, 70; Rev. Depayne Middleton-Doctor, 49; Rev. Clementa Pinckney, 41; Tywanza Sanders, 26; Rev. Daniel Simmons, 74; Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, 44; and Myra Thompson, 59; and

WHEREAS, the families of the Charleston Nine showed extraordinary compassion, forgiveness, and grace; and

WHEREAS, we affirm our common call to love amidst challenges, even during tough times as these, ever mindful that if any part of the Christian body is hurting, we’re all hurting (1 Corinthians 12:26); and

WHEREAS, Ephesians 4:4-6 reminds us all that there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all; and

WHEREAS, following this act of domestic terrorism, the ripple effects of hate-filled and racially motivated attacks on Black congregations throughout the United States have caused intimidation, fear and panic among members through the burning of church buildings, threatening letters, and phone calls; and

WHEREAS, several members of our congregations have become fearful and suspicious of visitors on Sunday mornings and other weeknights, especially our children who wonder aloud, “What are we going to do if someone comes in our church and tries to do that?”; and

WHEREAS, we recognize, as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in his Letter from Birmingham Jail, that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” and “we truly are “tied together in a single garment of destiny;” and

WHEREAS, our assembly is itself a manifestation of the Body of Christ in the world, remembering of one another at the Table and bearing witness to a divine love that transcends and must triumph over terror enacted upon that sacred Body and individual members of it, thus standing with our fellow Christians and declaring that we are truly the keepers of our “brothers and sisters;” and

WHEREAS, General Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) since the 1969 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Seattle, WA, have adopted resolutions and reports affirming the responsibility of the followers of Christ to pro-reconciliation/anti-racism, especially having approved the Pro-reconciliation/ Anti-racism Initiative as a mission priority of the 20/20 Vision during the 2001 General Assembly;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Columbus, Ohio, July 18-22, 2015, will seek justice for those harmed, comfort those who mourn, and join with those who struggle for justice and equality until “justice rolls
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly affirms our General Minister and President’s continuing public condemnation of the massacre of the Charleston Nine and the burning of African American churches; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly calls upon the College of Regional Ministers to be especially attentive to the ongoing pastoral care needs of Disciples ethnic minority congregations within their regions, endeavoring to provide pertinent training and support for pastors and leaders who are trying to help their congregations cope with acts of racial violence such as the recent tragedies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly calls upon the General Minister and President’s Pastoral Table to work with Reconciliation Ministry, the Council on Christian Unity, and the College of Regional Ministers to establish appropriate means to commemorate the Charleston Nine and their families and to encourage predominantly white Disciples congregations in the United States and Canada to worship and serve with predominantly African American congregations to work to eliminate the sin of systemic racism; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the Office of the General Minister and President report back to the 2017 General Assembly actions taken in response to this resolution and suggestions of future, concrete action that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) may take to end the cruel evil of racially motivated violence, especially targeted against black churches.

Submitted by:

Rev. Jesse Jackson Jr., pastor of East Sixth Street CC, OKC, OK
Rev. Derrick Perkins, pastor of Centennial CC, St. Louis, MO
Rev. Dr. Donald K. Gillett, pastor of East Second St. CC Lexington, KY
Rev. Dr. Judy Cummings, pastor New Covenant CC, Nashville, TN
Dr. William Crowder, pastor Park Manor CC, Chicago, IL
Rev. Kevin McNeil, pastor Mt. Zion CC, Floyd, VA
Rev. Geoffrey Brewster, Phillips Theological Seminary, Tulsa, OK
Rev. Rob Crawford, Bartlesville, OK
Rev. Michael Riggs, pastor First CC, Tulsa, OK
Rev. Joseph Garkovich, pastor, First CC, Canon City, CO
Rev. Dr. Eric Brown, pastor, Woodland CC, Columbus, OH
Rev. Kelli Driscoll, pastor, Bethany CC, Tulsa, OK

On behalf of the General Board, the Committee on Reference and Counsel recommends the General Assembly ADOPT GA-1539.
(Discussion time: 12 minutes)