

# Mission

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Beginning in 1977, the Board of Directors of the Division of Overseas Ministries, under the leadership of President Robert Thomas, began once again to re-examine the Disciples understanding of world mission. After nearly four years of study and dialogue, including the study of earlier work done by the UCMS and the “Commission on the Theology of Mission,” the DOM issued its “General Principles and Policies” statement. The General Assembly of the Disciples adopted this statement in Anaheim in 1981. Sandwiched between sections addressing “Historical Perspective” and “Policy Guidelines” is a section entitled “Theological Principles.” In this section of the statement, Disciples, for the first time, self-consciously addressed the nature of their theological understanding of world mission. These six statements, taken from the DOM statement, indicate the developing Disciples theological reflection about mission:

1. “God has never, in any time or place, been without witness. One who is more fully known in Jesus Christ has been and is at work in the creation of community, the sharing of love, the seeking of freedom, the search for truth, the reactions of wonder and awe in the presence of nature’s power and beauty and creativity, and the awareness of the worth of persons.”
2. “The church is the community God calls into being and enables to engage in God’s mission.”
3. “This is not to say that the church is to be identified either with Christ or the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom in its fullness is solely the gift of God; any human achievement in history can only be approximate and relative to the ultimate goal—the promised new heaven and new earth. Yet this kingdom is the inspiration and constant challenge in all our struggles.”
4. “The church of Christ is one. All persons who confess faith in Christ are part of the one body. The divisions that historical, geographical, societal, theological and liturgical factors produce are limitations upon the proper functioning of the body. God wills that the church be one. That does not mean all alike, but rather a community capable of accepting with joy the enrichment of great diversity....Commitment to evangelism, mission, and justice is inseparable from a commitment to church union.”
5. “Apart from accepting God’s love, persons continue in sin, in estrangement and revolt against God. The declaration of God’s forgiving grace in Jesus Christ calls forth a primary faith commitment....Confessing faith in Christ and being Christ’s disciples makes persons more fully aware that they belong inescapably together in the fellowship and freedom of the Holy Spirit, and enables a witness to the ultimate hope for the world, the coming of the Kingdom.”

6. “God is the final source and author of all human justice and freedom. Christ calls the church to challenge all attempts to deprive persons of their humanity and to support all who suffer on behalf of justice and freedom, witnessing always to the Gospel’s declaration of the uniqueness and value of all persons as children of God.”