

# CALLING THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO JUSTICE FOR PERSONS WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESSES (BRAIN DISORDERS)

## Background

There exists in society and even in the church, great stigma and discrimination against persons with serious "mental illnesses" (Brain Disorders); this is both a ministry and a social justice issue.

All people are created in the image of God and worthy of being treated with dignity, respect and love. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (1 John 13:34-35).

## Text of the Resolution

**WHEREAS**, serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder (manic depression), unipolar disorder (clinical depression), obsessive/compulsive disorder, panic anxiety disorder are biological brain disorders and need to be treated as any other biologically based medical problem of any other organ of the body;

**WHEREAS**, the 1990's have been declared the decade of the brain and pioneering research has resulted in new knowledge and new effective medications;

**WHEREAS**, these brain disorders can now be treated as precisely and effectively as other medical disorders (e.g. a higher rate of success in such treatment than for cardiovascular disorders);

**WHEREAS**, there continues to be strong stigma and discrimination in society against people with these brain disorders in social relationships, health insurance coverage, employment, etc.;

**WHEREAS**, there is great inequality in health insurance coverage for these medical conditions compared to coverage of any other physical, medical illness/disorder (diabetes, Parkinson's, etc.);

**WHEREAS**, at least one in four families (including church families) has a family member with one of these brain disorders;

**WHEREAS**, at least 30 million Americans, including at least 12 million children have these brain disorders; and

**WHEREAS**, the church is called to be a community which breaks through fear and isolation to offer love, hope, care and healing;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Twenty-second General Synod requests the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and/or its successor body to make it a priority to educate congregations

about these disorders and encourage congregations to be truly inclusive, welcoming churches, ministering with and to persons with these disorders and their families;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Executive Council is requested to petition The Pension Boards - United Church of Christ to provide insurance coverage for these brain disorders equal to any other physical illness; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Office for Church in Society and/or its successor body is requested to promote advocacy in state legislatures and in Congress for equality in health insurance coverage and other antidiscrimination legislation which affects this population of people.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.