

Protestant Denomination Embraces Gnosticism, Sexual Liberalism, Transgenderism

The General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has joined with several other old-line Protestant denominations in embracing sexual orientation and gender identity as specially affirmed categories in the church.

At their meeting, held July 13-17 in Orlando, Fla., the church's governing body passed a resolution listing sexual orientation and gender identity alongside race, age and other categories to which the denomination is "striving to become a people of grace and welcome."

The resolution also affirms the "faith, baptism and spiritual gifts of all Christians regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity" and states that neither is "grounds for exclusion from fellowship or service within the church" but celebrated as "part of God's good creation."

This statement implies affirmation of clergy sexually active outside traditional marriage. The Disciples of Christ has a very congregationalist polity, with nearly all ministry decisions made at the local church. The new denominational stance is mostly symbolic.

The Disciples of Christ is the smallest of seven Protestant churches historically classified as mainline. The denomination has lost two-thirds of its once nearly 2 million membership since the 1960s and currently lists 639,500 members. Prominent members have included Presidents Ronald Reagan, Lyndon Johnson and James Garfield.

Mark Tooley, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, which has been a voice for transparency, for

renewal, and for Christian orthodoxy since 1981, isn't surprised at the dwindling membership of the Disciples of Christ.

"While the resolution calls for the 'welcome of and hospitality to all,' the Disciples of Christ include far fewer members than at any time in their modern history," Toole says. "The mainstream of U.S. and global Christianity still holds strongly to traditional Christian teaching upholding the marriage of man and woman as the standard for Christian sexual behavior. Universal Christianity also rejects the gnostic idea that 'gender identity is fluid and self-determined.'

"By embracing sexual liberalism and gnosticism, the Disciples [of Christ] have further sidelined their church. Exalting Western notions of radically individual moral autonomy above shared understandings of the faith alienates many of the denomination's own members. The Disciples of Christ now follow the United Church of Christ and the Episcopal Church on the road to even greater theological marginalization, internal division and accelerating membership loss."