

F. RESOLUTION ON
ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME
(AIDS)

27.241

[For Assembly action see page [47](#)]

The Advisory Council on Church and Society submits the following resolution on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) to the 198th General Assembly (1986) and recommends that the resolution be adopted.

27.242

Whereas, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and AIDS Related Conditions (ARC) have afflicted more than 16,000 persons in the United States, with a death toll exceeding 7,700 (as of December, 1985) and has a global impact for the continents of Africa and Europe as well;

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Whereas, the Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia, has predicted that the rate of infection will double every nine to twelve months with the fatality rate approaching 100 percent within two to three years of diagnosis;

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Whereas, no definitive cure, vaccine, or accurate diagnostic predictive tests has yet been found;

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Whereas, although it is true that the AIDS virus has been identified in several body fluids, the fear of the disease is often irrational and in contradiction to the best medical evidence (an example would be the fear of donating blood). The evidence indicates that transmission of the disease is primarily through sexual contact (anal and oral intercourse with the potential for transmission through vaginal intercourse being studied) or contact with contaminated blood supplies or contaminated needles which have been used by intravenous drug-users;

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Whereas, certain leaders of various Christian denominations and groups publicly declare AIDS and ARC to be God's righteous judgment upon persons these spokespeople believe to be living in violation of God's will;

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Whereas, certain persons seeking or holding political office or public position are misusing the AIDS and ARC problem for the reason of advocating policies not congruent with the best medical evidence and are also misusing the potential of an AIDS /ARC epidemic to further oppress and endanger the welfare and human rights of gay men, intravenous drug-users, hemophiliacs, and others at high risk for these diseases;

27.248

Whereas, those persons requested to participate as subjects in medical research to find the causes and cures for AIDS and ARC may be disadvantaged by the very evidence they make

available for the public good by being denied insurance coverage, employment, and the enjoyment of a reasonable social, political, and economic life through the misuse and disclosure of such information;

27.249

Whereas, many persons with AIDS and ARC, and in some cases members of their families, have suffered discrimination at home, at work, at school, and in some cases, in their churches;

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Whereas, incarcerated persons who are diagnosed with AIDS and ARC are not always receiving adequate medical care and psychological support;

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Whereas, the danger exists that persons with positive AIDS antibody tests, and persons in some AIDS high-risk groups may not be able to obtain life, medical, and disability insurance;

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Whereas, many lesbians and gay men have felt that the church's teaching on homosexuality excluded them from the church's care, and whereas many persons with AIDS /ARC request spiritual counseling when diagnosed and thus challenge the church to carry out its ministry of pastoral counseling and compassionate care;

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Whereas, the church, following the example of Jesus'

496

healing ministry, has been a longtime advocate for comprehensive health care for the ill and a prophetic voice for those who are oppressed because of social prejudice or medical illness;

Therefore, the 198th General Assembly (1986) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

27.254

1. Declares that AIDS and ARC are illnesses, not punishment for behavior deemed immoral.

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2. Calls upon Presbyterians to pray for the healing of persons afflicted with AIDS or ARC, insight for the researchers, and strength for the care-givers, family, and loved ones of persons with AIDS and ARC.

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3. Calls for the church at the congregational level to minister to persons with AIDS, their families and loved ones in a nonjudgmental manner which supports them through a period of extreme crisis.

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4. Calls upon the federal, state, and local governments and private corporations to assign priority and provide funding to AIDS /ARC research appropriate to the seriousness and magnitude of the epidemic.

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5. Calls upon the Congress and the President of the United States to enact and sign legislation protecting persons who voluntarily participate in research programs involving AIDS and ARC so that those volunteers are not disadvantaged in any way by the results of information so obtained.

27.259

6. Calls upon presbyteries to identify legal, educational, psychological, hospice, and other care-giving resources in their bounds, make those resources known generally to churches in their presbytery, and encourage Presbyterians to support and participate in opportunities for volunteer service to persons with AIDS -ARC and others affected by the disease.

27.260

7. Calls upon Presbyterians to condemn the potential threat of AIDS as an excuse for discrimination and oppression and to work for legislation and other measures insuring the protection of civil and human rights of those persons affected directly or indirectly by the AIDS -ARC, such as: (a) persons with AIDS or ARC; (b) persons in high risk groups not afflicted with AIDS or ARC; (c) persons with HTLV-III-positive (the so-called AIDS virus test results); (d) persons neither at high risk nor showing an HTLV-II I-positive test result; (e) the family, friends, and other close associates of persons who are afflicted with AIDS or ARC.

27.261

8. Calls upon appropriate agencies of the General Assembly and governing bodies to work ecumenically, particularly to support the work of the National Council of Churches Task Force on AIDS and the World Council of Churches Consultation on AIDS in their efforts to develop a forceful theological base for ministry to persons with AIDS as well as efforts to share models of ministry and provide accurate information to all denominations.

Any financial costs for implementation would come through support for conciliar work on AIDS by monetary contributions beyond current levels and would be a matter for priority determination within overall health ministry planning and budgeting.

27.262

9. Calls upon Presbyterians to work within the various educational systems in churches and communities to provide accurate, current AIDS information to diffuse the unfounded fears created by ignorance or false information.

27.263

10. Calls upon the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to review its own personnel policies and health benefits so that they may serve as a model for others in the just treatment of persons with AIDS, insuring that such persons and those in the other categories mentioned in Recommendation 7 are not discriminated against in employment or in eligibility for and access to full health benefits.

27.264

11. Calls upon the General Assembly agencies and governing bodies to seek out and make use of those local and national resource persons and groups that are expert in AIDS - related issues.

27.265

12. Requests that the Stated Clerk send copies of this resolution with an appropriate cover letter to the President of the United States, members of Congress, the Center of Disease Control, the National Institute of Health, the American Council of Life Insurance Companies, the Health Insurance Association of America, the National Gay Task Force, the National Lesbian/Gay Health Forum, and other individuals and groups as may be appropriate.

27.266

The communication of the resolution and a cover letter to the persons and groups noted (perhaps 575) would cost approximately \$300, according to guidelines supplied by the General Assembly Council. The budget for the Office of the General Assembly contains amounts designated for such purposes.