

1 mation and appreciation to the other volunteers.  
2 Edith Guffey presented a plaque to UCC Co-chair,  
3 Robert Atkinson and asked other volunteers stand  
4 with him to be recognized.

5  
6 **6. INVITATION TO THE TWENTY-**  
7 **FOURTH GENERAL SYNOD IN MINNE-**  
8 **APOLIS, MINNESOTA**

9 Ms. Taylor thanked the wonderful hosts in Kansas  
10 City. A brief video was presented on Minneapolis,  
11 site of the next General Synod, followed by a formal  
12 invitation extended by the Rev. Karen Smith  
13 Sellers, Acting Conference Minister of Minnesota,  
14 and Ms. Edi Apelt, Conference Moderator.

15  
16 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) announced  
17 that the next General Assembly would be held in  
18 Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2003. Time  
19 was given for business of the General Assembly.

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21  
22 **7. RESOLUTION: ACCESS TO EXCEL-**  
23 **LLENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A CHILD'S**  
24 **RIGHT IN THE 21ST CENTURY.**

25 Ms. Taylor called on Ms. Althea White (NY), Chair  
26 of Committee Eight. Ms. White introduced the  
27 resolution "Access to Excellent Public Schools: A  
28 Child's Right in the 21st Century," noting a minor  
29 printing error in the distributed materials. She  
30 yielded time to the Rev. Carl P. Wallace, who spoke  
31 about the right to an education as the foremost civil  
32 rights issue. He called on local churches to become  
33 involved and to be more intentional about becoming  
34 civil rights advocates.

35 Moderator Taylor called for the vote.

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38 01-GS-43 VOTED: The Twenty-Third General  
39 Synod adopts the resolution "Access to Excellent  
40 Public Schools: A Child's Right in the 21st Century."  
41

42  
43 **ACCESS TO EXCELLENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS:**  
44 **A CHILD'S CIVIL RIGHT IN THE 21ST CEN-**  
45 **TURY**

46  
47 WHEREAS The National Education Association  
48 in its 2000–2001 resolution process declared "that  
49 public education is the cornerstone of our social,  
50 economic, and political structure and is of utmost  
51 significance in the development of our moral, ethi-  
52 cal, spiritual, and cultural values";<sup>1</sup> and

53  
54 WHEREAS the Children's Defense Fund declared  
55 that "equal educational opportunity is a myth in  
56 millennial America," and that "overall, America's  
57 children are not being educated to the high levels  
58 they have a right to expect";<sup>2</sup> and

59 WHEREAS thirteen million—or one in five—  
American children live in poverty,<sup>3</sup> the overwhelm-

ing majority of whom attend schools that receive inequitable and inadequate school funding due to the dependence of poor school districts on limited property taxes to support public education; and

WHEREAS these school districts, out of ignorance and racism, tend to marginalize children and families who are not of the dominant culture; and

WHEREAS the public school population of students whose first language is other than English continues to increase, thus placing even more stress on struggling school districts; and

WHEREAS there is a severe shortage of well-qualified teachers, particularly in rural and urban areas, which further perpetuates injustice in the public school system; and

WHEREAS the propensity of the popular press is to bash public schools, public school teachers, and poor families, encouraging the latter to settle for false promises and over-simplistic "solutions" such as vouchers; and

WHEREAS funding for Title I and Title VII of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which benefits poor children and the schools that serve them, is in severe jeopardy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

calls on the United Church of Christ in all its settings to proclaim public school support and advocacy for the same as one of the foremost civil rights issues in the twenty-first century;

urges local churches, Associations, and Conferences, consistent with previous actions taken by the Fifteenth General Synod in 1985, "Pronouncement on Public Education," and the Eighteenth General Synod in 1991, "Support of Quality Integrated Education for All Children in Public Schools," to call on local, state and federal governments to enact and enforce laws and policies that support a public education system that provides each child with an equal educational opportunity;

urges local churches to recruit new and uphold existing public educators, students, parents, school boards, and community leaders as activists for the civil right to excellent public education for all children;

encourages local churches and their individual members to take an active role in their local public schools, through church sponsored tutoring, after school activities, mentoring, book drives, or other such support activities as their local public schools may immediately need. Further encourages local churches to identify, become educated about, and work to eliminate systemic barriers to excellent public education for all.

1 requests that Justice and Witness Ministries con-  
2 vene a cross-covenanted ministries Public Educa-  
3 tion Task Force to engage all parts of the wider  
4 church in the work that the AMA/CRJ Public Edu-  
5 cation Task Force began.

6  
7 requests that this Task Force, in collaboration with  
8 the Justice and Witness Ministries, Local Church  
9 Ministries, and the Proclamation, Identity, and  
10 Communications Team, convene at least once  
11 yearly to visit public schools and reflect on their  
12 findings for church-wide discernment;

13  
14 calls on this Task Force to work with the Ministry  
15 for Youth and Young Adult Empowerment to de-  
16 velop youth leadership for public school transfor-  
17 mation;

18  
19 calls on the United Church of Christ Research De-  
20 partment, along with this Task Force, to launch a  
21 denomination-wide survey to identify and priori-  
22 tize challenges public schools face, to which the  
23 United Church of Christ may respond;

24  
25 calls on this Task Force to develop an umbrella  
26 coalition across the thirty-nine Conferences of the  
27 United Church of Christ, comprised of clergy and  
28 lay persons, public school educators, parents, stu-  
29 dents, and civic activists to support public school  
30 justice, parent involvement, and equitable public  
31 school financing;

32  
33 calls on this Task Force to report to the Twenty-  
34 fourth and Twenty-fifth General Synods on its  
35 progress, including identifying systemic barriers  
36 to excellent public education and recommending  
37 strategies to address those barriers.

38  
39 funding for this action will be made in accordance  
40 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies  
41 and the funds available.

42  
43 Resolution of witness. Requires a two-thirds vote  
44 for passage.

45  
46 References

- 47 1. National Education Association: Available on-  
48 line at <[http://www.nea.org/resolutions/00/](http://www.nea.org/resolutions/00/00a-1.html)  
49 [00a-1.html](http://www.nea.org/resolutions/00/00a-1.html)>.  
50 2. Children's Defense Fund: Available online at  
51 <[http://www.childrensdefense.org/fair-](http://www.childrensdefense.org/fair-start_faq.html)  
52 [start\\_faq.html](http://www.childrensdefense.org/fair-start_faq.html)>.  
53 3. Children's Defense Fund: Available online at  
54 <[http://www.childrensdefense.org/key-](http://www.childrensdefense.org/key-facts_education.html)  
55 [facts\\_education.html](http://www.childrensdefense.org/key-facts_education.html)>.

56  
57 The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) con-  
58 ducted business.  
59

**8. RESOLUTION: HEALTH EFFECTS AND  
IMPACTS OF TOBACCO ON CHILDREN,  
TEENAGERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Ms. Taylor called on the Chair of Committee Four, Ms. Amarilys Ramos (PR), to present the recommended action from Committee Four. She noted a change to the third "Be It Therefore Resolved:" following the words "the Interministry Health Table," add the words "... the Association of United Church Educators, Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries. . . ." Ms. Ramos moved adoption of the resolution on the Effects of Tobacco on Children, Teenagers, and Their Families. After discussion, Moderator Taylor called for the vote.

01-GS-44 VOTED: The Twenty-Third General Synod adopts the resolution "Health Effects and Impacts of Tobacco on Children, Teenagers, and Their Families."

**HEALTH EFFECTS AND IMPACTS OF TOBACCO ON CHILDREN, TEENAGERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES**

WHEREAS, God's good gift of creation includes our bodies, and we are called to be good stewards of our life and health;

WHEREAS, part of our responsibility for sharing in the shepherding activities of society as citizens is to help create conditions for the health of our communities;

WHEREAS, tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States;

WHEREAS, worldwide, every ten seconds another person dies as a result of tobacco use;

WHEREAS, smoking of tobacco products is a major cause of illness that contributes to the premature death of hundreds of thousands of people living in the United States;

WHEREAS, each day three thousand young people become regular smokers;

WHEREAS, four to five million youth aged twelve to seventeen are current smokers;

WHEREAS, smoking rates among youngsters continue to rise and are at their highest levels in nineteen years;

WHEREAS, tobacco companies are targeting their promotional efforts to children and youth with the result that ninety percent of new smokers are teenagers or younger;

WHEREAS, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke worsens symptoms of asthma and causes respiratory infections in children;