

1 In conclusion, Ms. Guffey also shared that the reality is that mission takes money. Money is needed to support
2 missionaries, to start new churches, to host a large youth event, to pay for commercials. She shared hope that the
3 delegates and visitors make a personal commitment to increase Our Church's Wider Mission, and that this
4 commitment lingers long after the excitement of General Synod.

6 **13. MARRIGE EQUALITY**

7 Assistant Moderator Eric Smith called on Ms. Elizabeth Nordbeck, Chair of Committee Three, to present the
8 recommended actions from that committee. The Committee was assigned the resolutions concerning equal marriage
9 rights to all and marriage between one man and one woman.

10
11 Ms. Nordbeck briefly described the work of the committee, and its actions. She noted these resolutions were widely
12 publicized and that the committee had been joined by four hundred observers and many press representatives. She
13 expressed pride that the entire group's conversation was so quiet and respectful that the members of the media had
14 disappeared by afternoon, looking for more action and controversy. She stated the entire day's work was punctuated
15 by prayer, biblical reflection and song. She explained the combination of two resolutions had been done in
16 consultation with the sponsors of the initial two resolutions.

17
18 Ms. Nordbeck moved, on behalf of Committee Three, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod adopt the substitute
19 resolution entitled "Resolution in Support of Equal Marriage Rights for All for General Synod 25 of the United
20 Church of Christ."

21
22 Ms. Nordbeck described the deliberations. She stated the committee is persuaded that now is the moment for the
23 United Church of Christ to make a statement of prophetic witness on equal marriage rights for all. She said the
24 committee recognized that many people in our congregations will find this resolution difficult. She said the
25 committee reorganized the 'be it resolved' paragraphs into those that provide prophetic witness, and those that are
26 meant to support our members and congregation's deliberations and considerations of this action of General Synod.

27
28 Ms. Lisa Stedman (JWM) and Ms. Johanna Hattendorf (MASS) spoke first, recalling their service of covenant
29 eighteen years ago in a Unitarian Universalist church because there was no United Church of Christ church in which
30 this service of covenant could take place; one year ago, gathered before two hundred fifty friends and family, and
31 members of four congregations, they had served to witness their legal marriage. They stated the difference between
32 civil union and marriage is huge. They stressed that marriage expresses the commitment and love more fully in the
33 powerful language and idiom of our day. Equal marriage conveys equal understanding and equal respect. Mr. Bill
34 Boyland (MASS) of the Human Sexuality Task Force cited that this resolution was put forth with no Biblical
35 warrant. Quoting Martin Luther, he said we should recognize that our conscience should be held captive to the word
36 of God. He affirmed that we have a Still Speaking God, but he stated the word of God is still the same. Mr. John
37 Deckenback (CAC) spoke of his pride in the Conference for submitting one of the two resolutions combined into
38 this resolution. Two weeks ago, delegates at Central Atlantic Conference voted to affirm the Southern California
39 Nevada resolution. He said passage of this resolution is simply the right thing to do. This is the right place for the
40 United Church of Christ to be. It is time to affirm equal rights. Rev. Steve Gray (IK) asked that the General Synod
41 provide a differentiation of ethical implications for equal rights and concerns for our beloved denomination. He
42 stated there is a cost as well as joy attached to this resolution. Among the costs he cited were the cost of churches,
43 income, members, and morale. He expressed hope that the General Synod would provide for two additional years
44 for members to catch up, think, study and pray. He said there would be long-term implications for our church with
45 action taken now.

46
47 Ms. Barbara Van Eck (MI) proposed the following amendment to line number 163: bodies, "and acknowledging the
48 pain and struggle their passage will engender" within.... The amendment was seconded.

49
50 Assistant Moderator Smith asked if anyone would like to speak to the amendment. Seeing no one, Mr. Smith called
51 for a vote on the proposed amendment.

52
53 05-GS-24 VOTED: The Twenty-fifth General Synod amends the resolution "Equal Marriage Rights," to add the
54 words, "and acknowledging the pain and struggle their passage will engender."

55
56 Assistant Moderator Smith returned to the amended resolution and main motion.

1 Mr. Mark Fernald (NH) proposed an amendment to the title, making it “Resolution in Support of Equal Rights for
2 all in Covenanted Relationships.” Additionally, he suggested an amendment to line 116 by replacing “same-gender
3 marriages” with “same-gender covenanted relationships.” Amendment to lines 123, 144,168-169, and 180-181 by
4 replacing “equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender” with “equal rights for couples in covenanted
5 relationships regardless of gender.” Amendment to line 146 by deleting the words “marry and.” The amendment
6 was seconded.

7
8 Speaking to the amendment, Mr. Fernald stated he was in agreement with the theology behind the proposed
9 resolution. He stated he saw the resolution as a political statement with two objectives: equal rights, and change to
10 the definition about covenantal relationships. He cited the power of words, and stated that opponents to this
11 resolution in this body and throughout the country would like to fight this issue on marriage rather than equal rights.
12 He also mentioned the difficulties in recognition of civil unions from Vermont and marriages from Massachusetts.
13 He stated his proposed amendment retains the resolution as a bold statement.

14
15 Mr. John Hudson (MASS) raised a point of order about substantial change of an amendment. The Moderator ruled
16 the General Synod will decide whether or not the amendment substantially changes the understanding of the
17 resolution. Mr. Jay Sprout (VT) spoke in support of the amendment. He felt this amendment opens the door to a
18 new way of thinking about this issue. It will strengthen the wall of separation between church and state, leaving the
19 word marriage to evolve over time. It will put all relationships on an equal footing. Trying to legislate the meaning
20 of a word is foolish. Mr. Thom Parrott-Sheffer (IL) urged the defeat of the amendment on the grounds of Robert’s
21 Rules. He stated the time is now. He has celebrated many covenants and it is time for his gay son to have access to
22 marriage

23
24 Mr. Kyle Tate (IL) raised a question of clarification by asking the proposer of the amendment for the definition of
25 covenanted relationships. Mr. Fernald defined covenanted relationships as a term for a relationship between two
26 people where they make a covenant with each other.

27
28 Mr. David Schnaars (PNE) moved that the vote on this resolution be postponed until the next General Synod. The
29 motion was seconded.

30
31 Mr. Bob Anderson (PC) stated the motion was out of order since it deals with the resolution and not the amendment.
32 Moderator Smith declared the motion supercedes the amendment. This isn’t an amendment. It’s a motion to
33 postpone, which takes precedent. It is debatable and amendable to a definite time. After further discussion on the
34 postponement of the motion, Mr. J. J. Johnson (PC) moved to postpone discussion to the beginning of the first
35 business session tomorrow morning.

36
37 The proposed amendment to postpone the vote on the amendment to the beginning of the first business session
38 tomorrow was defeated.

39
40 The motion to postpone vote on the resolution until General Synod Twenty-six was defeated.

41
42 Mr. Smith directed the delegates to the original amendment proposed by Mr. Fernald to change the title to
43 “Resolution in Support of Equal Rights for all in Covenanted Relationships.” Additionally, the amendment of line
44 116 by replacing “same-gender marriages” with “same-gender covenanted relationships.” Amendment to lines 123,
45 144,168-169, and 180-181 by replacing “equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender” with “equal rights
46 for couples in covenanted relationships regardless of gender.” Amendment to line 146 by deleting the words “marry
47 and.”

48
49 After further discussion, the amendment to change the title and indicated lines was defeated.

50
51 After much discussion that spoke to the original resolution, Assistant Moderator Smith appealed to the order of the
52 day. He agreed to let discussion continue, but urged speakers to make their points briefly and not to repeat what has
53 already been said.

54
55 Following further discussion, a motion was made and seconded to end debate. Mr. Smith ended debate and restated
56 the motion.

1
2 05-GS-25 VOTED: The Twenty-fifth General Synod votes to end debate on the "Resolution in Support of Equal
3 Marriage Rights for All for General Synod 25 of the United Church of Christ."
4

5 Assistant Moderator Smith returned the delegates to the vote on the main motion, the resolution as amended,
6 "Resolution in Support of Equal Marriage Rights for All for General Synod 25 of the United Church of Christ." He
7 answered a request for secret ballots, by stating the bylaws of General Synod only allowed secret ballots in the case
8 of contested elections. While he said the call for secret ballot had been ruled out of order, he asked the General
9 Synod by voice if they wished to amend the General Synod Bylaws. The vocal response was "no."
10

11 Rev. Bernice Powell Jackson requested a moment of silent prayer. In response to her request, Mr. Smith asked for
12 a moment of silent prayer and discernment from visitors and delegates.
13

14 Moderator Smith called for a vote on the main motion on the substitute resolution.
15

16 05-GS-26 VOTED: The Twenty-fifth General Synod adopts the resolution "Resolution in Support of Equal
17 Marriage Rights for All for General Synod 25 of the United Church of Christ."
18

19 **RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF EQUAL MARRIAGE RIGHTS FOR ALL FOR GENERAL SYNOD 25**
20 **OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**
21

22 WHEREAS the Bible affirms and celebrates human expressions of love and partnership, calling us to live out fully
23 that gift of God in responsible, faithful, committed relationships that recognize and respect the image of God in all
24 people; and
25

26 WHEREAS the life and example of Jesus of Nazareth provides a model of radically inclusive love and abundant
27 welcome for all; and
28

29 WHEREAS we proclaim ourselves to be listening to the voice of a Still Speaking God at that at all times in human
30 history there is always yet more light and truth to break forth from God's holy word; and
31

32 WHEREAS many UCC pastors and congregations have held commitment services for gay and lesbian couples for
33 some time, consistent with the call to loving, long-term committed relationships and to nurture family life; and
34

35 WHEREAS recognition of marriage carries with it significant access to institutional support, rights and benefits; and
36

37 WHEREAS children of families headed by same-gender couples should receive all legal rights and protections; and
38

39 WHEREAS legislation to ban recognition of same-gender marriages further undermine the civil liberties of gay and
40 lesbian couples and contributes to a climate of misunderstanding and polarization, increasing hostility against gays
41 and lesbians; and
42

43 WHEREAS a Constitutional Amendment has been introduced to this Congress to limit marriage to "only the union
44 of a man and a woman"; and
45

46 WHEREAS equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender is an issue deserving of serious, faithful
47 discussion by people of faith, taking into consideration the long, complex history of marriage and family life,
48 layered as it is with cultural practices, economic realities, political dynamics, religious history and biblical
49 interpretation; and
50

51 WHEREAS the Tenth General Synod pronounced that all person are entitled to full civil liberties and equal
52 protection under the law without discrimination related to sexual preference; and
53

1 WHEREAS the Eleventh General Synod urged that States should legislatively recognize that traditional marriage is
2 not the only stable living unit entitled to legal protection; and
3

4 WHEREAS the Nineteenth General Synod called on the church for greater leadership to end discrimination against
5 gays and lesbians; and
6

7 WHEREAS the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ in April, 2004 called the church to action and
8 dialogue on marriage;
9

10 THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms
11 equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender and declares that the government should not interfere with
12 couples regardless of gender who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and
13 commitment of legally recognized marriage; and
14

15 LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms
16 equal access to the basic rights, institutional protections and quality of life conferred by the recognition of marriage;
17 and
18

19 LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod calls for an end to rhetoric that fuels
20 hostility, misunderstanding, fear and hatred expressed toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons; and
21

22 LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Officers of the United Church of Christ are called upon to
23 communicate this resolution to local, state and national legislators, urging them to support equal marriage rights for
24 couples regardless of gender.
25

26 In recognition that these resolutions may not reflect the views or current understanding of all bodies, and
27 acknowledging the pain and struggle their passage will engender within the gathered church, the General Synod
28 encourages the following:
29

30 LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty -fifth General Synod calls upon all settings of the United
31 Church of Christ to engage in serious, respectful, and prayerful discussion of the covenantal relationship of marriage
32 and equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender, using the "God is still speaking, about Marriage" study
33 and discussion guide produced by Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ (available online at
34 UCC.org); and
35

36 LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod calls upon congregations, after prayerful
37 biblical, theological, and historical study, to consider adopting Wedding Policies that do not discriminate against
38 couples based on gender; and
39

40 LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod urges the congregations and individuals
41 of the United Church of Christ to prayerfully consider and support local, state and national legislation to grant equal
42 marriage rights to couples regardless of gender, and to work against legislation, including constitutional
43 amendments, which denies civil marriage rights to couples based on gender.
44

45 Funding for the implementation of this Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the
46 affected agencies and the funds available.
47

48 Assistant Moderator Smith recognized Rev. John Thomas and asked him to lead delegates and visitors in prayer.
49 Before doing so, Rev. Thomas asked the General Synod to express gratitude for Assistant Moderator Smith, his
50 grace and compassion, and for being a wise elder at a very young age. Rev. Thomas then offered a prayer of
51 thanksgiving for God's presence, and that all know God's comfort and presence in days ahead.
52

53 Mr. Smith announced that the work of Committee Three would continue in the next plenary session.
54