

1 Moderator Lawrence thanked all of the nominees who agreed to have their names submitted for consideration, and
2 who were willing to undertake the responsibilities of membership on the Nominating Committee. The following
3 persons were elected:

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5	Lori Jamshire (HI)	Judy Jones (NY)	Gail Holmes (WI)
6	Bernard Wilson (CONN)	J. Matthew Deal (PW)	Sheldon Culver (MOMS)
7	Nora Mismangle (MN)	Ray Reed (SOC)	Nelson Spencer (SE)
8	Norma Lopez (ILL)		

9 **4. RESOLUTION: RENEWING THE COVENANT WITH THE RURAL CHURCH**

10 Assistant Moderator Elizabeth King introduced Ms. Sandra Hudson (FL), Chairperson of Committee Seven, for the
11 introduction of resolutions from the committee. Ms. Hudson introduced the resolution "Renewing the Covenant
12 with the Rural Church" indicating the committee had amended the original resolution prior to presentation to the
13 delegates for vote.

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15 Ms. Hudson moved the adoption of the resolution "Renewing the Covenant with the Rural Church."

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17 07-GS -21 VOTED: The Twenty-sixth General Synod adopts the resolution "Renewing the Covenant with the
18 Rural Church as amended by committee.

19
20 **RENEWING THE COVENANT WITH THE RURAL CHURCH**

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22 Throughout its history, the United Church of Christ has faithfully lifted up our call to respond to the needs of the
23 poor and the marginalized. Because of this faithful awareness, significant ministries developed responding to the
24 needs of brothers and sisters who have been overlooked because of cultural, ethnic, orientation or racial reasons.
25 There is, however, a growing distress in Rural America, with its small towns and small congregations, as its
26 communities fade from the landscape. This diminishing of the rural population and with it the very sense of
27 community that has been a source of strength leaves those who remain spiritually, physically and emotionally
28 vulnerable. Inherent with our faith is a belief that God is the source of our hope. We in the United Church of Christ
29 acknowledge that God is experienced most fully when we are in community. Nevertheless, when that sense of
30 community is threatened by forces beyond the reach of the residents, then the experience of God and the hope which
31 God enables for us all is also threatened. While the United Church of Christ has sought in the past to address the
32 predicament of the small rural congregation, its members and pastors, today there is a vast gulf between the needs of
33 rural America and the ability of the United Church of Christ in all its settings to respond. Therefore the following
34 resolution is offered:

35
36 WHEREAS, over sixty percent of the churches in the United Church of Christ are located in rural areas of our
37 country, and

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39 WHEREAS, many of these congregations have memberships that are near or below fifty, with an average
40 attendance of less than thirty-five, and

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42 WHEREAS, Rural America is central in our basic faith about God's economy which recognizes that through the
43 cycle of planting and harvesting, God's rich and abundant Spirit is manifested, and

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45 WHEREAS, the health and vitality of the rural congregations, with their historic, covenantal presence, within the
46 body of the United Church of Christ, is as vital to the health of the entire church as any other group of
47 congregations, (Ephesians 4:5), and

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49 WHEREAS, many of these small rural congregations are in communities that suffer from out-migration with
50 declining populations that offer little or no prospect at present for numerical growth, though there are signs of a rural
51 renaissance to which these congregations are similarly ill equipped to respond, and

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53 WHEREAS, many of these congregations have few young folk who can help to carry the financial or duty burden,
54 and

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56 WHEREAS, these congregations frequently find themselves unable to support the usual patterns of worship,

1 Christian Education and other activities so necessary for healthy church life, and
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3 WHEREAS, these congregations struggle to secure pastoral leadership, and
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5 WHEREAS, many of these rural congregations are located in areas so isolated they provide little or no opportunity
6 for yoking with other congregations, and
7
8 WHEREAS, these rural congregations struggle to provide the basic components of church life, and
9 WHEREAS, having received, as fully as any other, the call to discipleship and the vision of faith filled church life,
10 many rural congregations face their inability to fulfill their call to discipleship, because of lack of resources:
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12 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-sixth General Synod recognizes the critical importance of rural
13 ministry within the United Church of Christ.
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15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Synod recognizes the special needs of the significant number of
16 churches in the United Church of Christ that are rural including the need for resources for Christian Education,
17 small membership Sunday Schools, meaningful worship even when the numbers are very small, outreach in the
18 midst of isolation, networking to build support, attracting pastoral leadership, and developing a vision that will
19 guide congregations into the future; and therefore:
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21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Synod recognizes the need to provide leadership that will empower
22 small membership rural congregations to address the justice issues that often go unnoticed such as rural poverty,
23 human rights, domestic violence, youth guidance and development, economic injustice and drug and alcohol abuse;
24 and therefore:
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26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Collegium of Officers will organize a task force with representation
27 including national staff, conferences, seminaries, other educational institutions and rural churches; and therefore:
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29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force will establish goals and strategies to address the needs and
30 challenges of rural churches and to identify and develop a strategy for disseminating existing resources for rural
31 churches; and therefore:
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33 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force report to the Executive Council at each of its meetings and that
34 the Task Force will present its recommendations for implementation including staffing resources at the Fall 2008
35 Executive Council; and therefore:
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37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Collegium will report to the Twenty-seventh General Synod on how the
38 Collegium is responding to the needs and challenges of the Rural Churches; and therefore:
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40 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that through these programmatic and resource avenues the United Church of Christ
41 will become a center for information sharing, support, and guidance for the rural congregations and the small
42 isolated communities they serve.
43
44 FUNDING
45 Funding and implementation of this resolution is to be made in accordance with the mandates and available funding
46 of the affected agencies.
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48 **5. RESOLUTION: TO RECOGNIZE 2007 AS A SABBATH YEAR**
49 Ms. Lawrence invited Ms. Hudson to continue with the second resolution from Committee Seven. Ms. Hudson
50 referred to several changes from the original resolution made during the committee process.
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52 Ms. Hudson moved the adoption of the resolution “To Recognize 2007 as a Sabbath Year.”
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54 Ms. Asher Reisman (ME) moved an amendment to line 170 “Be it further resolved that the General Synod of the
55 United Church of Christ encourage ethical investment and business development through the continent. Further that