

**9. RESOLUTION ADVOCATING FOR TAX REFORM AS CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP AND PUBLIC DUTY**

Ms. Davis moved the adoption of the resolution Advocating for Tax Reform as Christian Stewardship and Public Duty.

Ms. Davis reported the funding paragraph and implementation text has been switched at lines 1256 – 1261. She requested delegates place appropriate headings on the respective paragraphs.

**13-GS-62 VOTED:** The Twenty-ninth General Synod adopts the resolution Advocating for Tax Reform as Christian Stewardship and Public Duty.

**ADVOCATING FOR TAX REFORM AS CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP AND PUBLIC DUTY**

WHEREAS, in 2005, the Twenty-fifth General Synod approved the resolution “For the Common Good,” <http://www.ucc.org/justice/public-education/pdfs/Resolution-for-the-Common-Good.pdf> affirming that “paying taxes for government services is a civic responsibility of individuals and businesses”; “the tax code should be progressive, with the heaviest burden on those with the greatest financial means”; and reaffirming “the obligation of citizens to share through taxes the financial responsibility for public services that benefit all citizens, especially those who are vulnerable”;

WHEREAS, in 2005, the Twenty-fifth General Synod also approved the resolution, “To Advance the Cause of the Most Disadvantaged in the Budgetary and Appropriations Process,” <http://www.ucc.org/synod/resolutions/TO-ADVANCE-THE-CAUSE-OF-THE-MOST-DISADVANTAGED-IN-THE-BUDGETARY-AND-APPROPRIATION-PROCESS.pdf> urging the “General Minister and President and ... Justice and Witness Ministries to: ... exert their full influence in the public forum to support the restoration of more progressive taxes and to oppose cuts in programs that hurt the disadvantaged”;

WHEREAS, in 2003, the Twenty-fourth General Synod approved the resolution, “A Theological Response to Corporate Greed,” <http://www.ucc.org/synod/resolutions/A-THEOLOGICAL-RESPONSE-TO-CORPORATE-GREED.pdf> calling the UCC to “support legislation limiting the ability of companies to use offshore subsidiaries to shelter tax payments or to avoid transparency of information needed to monitor corporate behavior”;

WHEREAS, in 1975, the Tenth General Synod approved a “Statement on Racial and Economic Justice” calling the UCC to “address the need for just tax reform which recognizes the problem of inadequate income distribution”;

WHEREAS, in 1969, the Seventh General Synod approved the pronouncement, “Sharing the Cost of Government Fairly,” affirming that “taxes should fall on taxpayers in accordance with their ability to pay” and calling for a number of tax reforms including the elimination of the “present preferential treatment afforded most capital gains ....[which] should be taxed at the same rates as any other income.”

WHEREAS, the United States is an extremely wealthy nation;

WHEREAS, in 2011, 46.2 million people (15.0%) in the United States lived in poverty including 16.1 million children (21.9%) and, of these, 44% lived on less than half the poverty-level income;

WHEREAS, as the national income, per person, doubled over the past 38 years, income inequality rose: average income for the bottom 90% of households declined, average annual income for the next 9% rose by less than 50% (less than \$50,000), but annual income among the top 1/100<sup>th</sup> of 1% of households rose by an average of \$20 million;

WHEREAS, income inequality is weakening society and destroying the social fabric;

WHEREAS, shortcomings of the tax system highlighted in the 1969 pronouncement "Sharing the Cost of Government Fairly," persist:

- the tax system does not meet the test of equity,
- the tax base does not meet the test of adequacy, and
- the inequities of the federal law become inequalities in state taxation.

WHEREAS, churches and nonprofit organizations are unable to meet the needs and provide the opportunities needed by all God's people in order to live out God's vision for lives of fullness;

WHEREAS, in a nation of over 300 million people and a world of over six billion, government action is needed to provide for the common good and adequate tax revenues are needed to fund these activities;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has previously called for a tax system that is:

- progressive, insuring that higher-income households and corporations pay a greater share of income in taxes than lower-income ones;
- fair and without loopholes, havens and other arrangements that can be used to legally shield income from taxation;
- neutral, that is, does not create incentives for particular behaviors except when those behaviors are explicitly intended as a goal of public policy;
- adequate to raise sufficient funds to meet social needs and promote the welfare of all; and
- redistributive in order to reduce income inequality and enhance social cohesion.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Twenty-ninth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls all settings of the United Church of Christ to advocate, educate, work, and pray for:

- a financial transaction tax to reduce financial speculation;
- taxes on capital gains and "carried interest" (income earned by hedge fund managers that is currently taxed at the rate of capital gains) that match those levied on wages and salaries;
- a strong estate tax to reduce the transfer of massive wealth across generations;

- reform of the corporate income tax to 1) boost revenue, 2) close loopholes and stop the use of tax havens, and 3) end incentives that encourage corporations to move jobs offshore;
- a tax system that is progressive, fair, neutral, adequate, and redistributive; and,
- we call upon national staff to explore effectiveness and implications of carbon taxes.

### **FUNDING**

The Collegium of Officers, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

### **10. RESOLUTION FOR A CALL TO RESPOND TO VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN HONDURAS RESULTING FROM ILLEGAL DRUGS TRAFFICKING IN THE UNITED STATES**

Ms. Bonds called upon Ms. Hannah Snyder-Samuelsan, Chairperson of Committee 12, to present the recommended actions from that committee.

Ms. Snyder-Samuelsan moved that the Twenty-ninth General Synod adopt the resolution for A Call to Respond to Violence and Human Rights Violations in Honduras Resulting from Illegal Drugs Trafficking in the United States.

#### Discussion:

Ms. Marcia Charles (EC) spoke as one of the primary writers of the resolution. She has taken work teams to Honduras, where people have no shoes and no food. Schools are fenced to keep children safe. She urged delegates to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Honduras who have not been forgotten by God.

Mr. James Gottwald (PNE) expressed concern with the resolution. Having worked for fifteen years in Guatemala, he has seen gang violence, but his concern is that the resolution focuses on drug trafficking and not education.

Ms. Susie Craig (ME) spoke in support of the resolution saying that we enjoy freedom of speech while our Honduran brothers and sisters do not. When they do speak, they put themselves in jeopardy.

Mr. Drew McLaren (WCM) moved to amend Line 1417, adding “and drug policy.” The motion was seconded and Mr. McLaren spoke to his amendment.

Mr. Tyler Connoley (WCM) stated we need to look at more than foreign policy. We need to address the war on drugs.

Caroline Dean (CAC) called the question and the motion was seconded.