

5. NEHEMIAH'S LIFE: A CALL FOR CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

Assistant Moderator Lowes indicated that the next item of business was a resolution coming directly to the floor of the General Synod and indicated that the General Synod Standing Rules give this as an option for resolutions deemed noncontroversial and not in need of time in a General Synod Committee for discussing and refining the resolution.

Assistant Moderator Lowes indicated the resolution was submitted by Chicago Metropolitan Association, Fox Valley Association, and the Illinois Conference.

Yvette Wynn moved, on behalf of the Business Committee, that the Thirty-second General Synod adopt the resolution, and called on Bill McCarthy of the Chicago Metropolitan Association speak to the resolution.

Assistant Moderator Lowes, without objection, granted voice to Bill McCarthy for the purpose of address the resolution.

Bill McCarthy spoke to the resolution.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

19-GS-06 VOTED: The Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the resolution Nehemiah's Life: A Call for Congressional Hearings on Violence in America.

(Vote: 629 Yes; 8 No; 12 Abstentions – 649 electronic submissions recorded)

NEHEMIAH'S LIFE: A CALL FOR CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

A Resolution of Witness

Text of the Resolution

Whereas, the heart of God is goodness and love. God's love for humankind is expressed in part by God's inestimable gift of free will to each person while creating us in God's image (Genesis 1:26). In response to God's love, we are commanded to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as our self. (Mark 12:30-31).

Whereas, in civil society we are often placed in stressful and contested relationships with other persons, yet we are commanded still to work to normalize relationships with our fellow persons as best we can in love, so as to be able to come to God in prayer with a pure heart. (1 John 4:20-21).

Whereas, we are cautioned against doing violence toward one another because the heart of our creator is love and we are admonished to imitate the motive of the creator and to love one

another forever. We are admonished, as far as it is possible, to live peaceably with one another (Romans 12:18).

Whereas, America has historically committed itself to free will for its citizens under the protection of law, our country fought a war to end human slavery, and our government has passed civil rights laws to equalize the legal rights of its citizens. Yet with all, full social justice has eluded our population and acts of violence in America have reached epidemic proportions.

Whereas, retaliatory violence is the product of societal injustice, lack of real opportunity and emotional isolation. For example, nearly every person in the Chicago, IL area has been affected by violence at one time or another. This trend of civilian violence is duplicated in almost every major city in the country and costs America substantial loss of life every year among all segments of our population.

Whereas, and by example, a national study entitled, “Violence in the United States: Status, Challenges, and Opportunities,” well researched by health-care professionals and published 8/4/15 in the Journal of the American Medical Assn., stated in part, “Interpersonal violence, which includes child abuse and neglect, youth violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and elder abuse, affects millions of US residents each year. However, surveillance systems, programs, and policies to address violence often lack broad, cross-sector collaboration, and there is limited awareness of effective strategies to prevent violence.”

Whereas, the United Church of Christ is one of the most diverse Christian denominations in the United States; and the UCC connects caring and acting, gratitude and giving, peace and justice, service and advocacy in a life of prayer and justice, whose motto is “That they may all be one.”

Whereas, the United Church of Christ seeks to sustain a collective voice of social witness, and encourages the study, proclamation and living of justice and peace in the church and in the world by sponsoring a continuous effort of public action and witness.

Whereas, violence manifests itself in many forms, including, but not limited to systemic and structural violence sanctioned by the state such as racism, police crimes, and economic disparities as well as interpersonal violence such as domestic and sexual abuse and community harm. We are admonished, as far as possible, to identify and address these issues without establishing laws and policies which serve to increase incarceration.

Whereas, the United Church of Christ, rooted in its ancient witness to God’s love, has chosen to take a stand against many forms of violence in America and particularly as follows:

- a) in 1983, General Synod 14 adopted the, “Pronouncement on Violence in Relation to Women.
- b) In 1995, General Synod 20 passed the resolution: “Guns and Violence;” calling on UCC members to engage in reflection to better understand the roots of violence in our culture.
- c) in 1995, General Synod 20 passed the resolution: Violence in our Society and World,” affirming that the U.C.C. actively opposes violence as a societal norm, calling on members to advocate for public policy programs which address the root causes of violence and poverty.

- d) In 1999, General Synod 22 passed the resolution: “Prevention of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Suicide;”
- e) In 2001, General Synod 23 passed the resolution: “Calling on the United Church of Christ to Join the Decade to Overcome Violence;” a United Nations worldwide anti-violence appeal.
- f) In 2003, General Synod 24 passed the resolution: “Reaffirming the U.C.C.’s denouncement of Violence Against Lesbian and Gay People and Calling for the Inclusion of Transgender People within that Anti-Violence Statement;”
- g) In 2011, General Synod 28 passed the resolution: “To Counter Actions of Hostility Against Islam and the Muslim Community,” on the upcoming 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.
- h) In 2013, General Synod 29 passed the resolution: “Resolution Against Bullying and Discrimination;”

Now therefore be it resolved, that the Thirty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the Congress of the United States to conduct formal hearings to discover systemic and proximate causes of civilian violence in America, and to receive testimony as to changes in American society that may be undertaken to alleviate the effects of violence on the American people.

Funding:

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.

Implementation:

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

6. OUR CHURCH’S WIDER MISSION

Assistant Moderator Lowes called on the Director of the Office of Philanthropy, Technology, Identity and Communication, Cynthia Bailie, for a presentation on OCWM.

Cynthia Bailie spoke on celebrating OCWM’s Basic Support and Five for Five program.

7. MUSIC/STRETCH BREAK

8. STATE OF THE CHURCH ADDRESS

Assistant Moderator Lowes invited the General Minister and President to bring the “State of the Church” address.

Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer spoke on the State of the Church.

9. FORMER UCC PRESIDENTS PRESENTATION

Assistant Moderator Lowes invited Rev. Dr. Dorhauer to remain at the podium to introduce the former UCC Presidents.