

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

A Pronouncement adopted by the Eighth General Synod

June 26, 1971

“A pronouncement is a declaration of Christian conviction on a matter of social principle, approved by the General Synod and directed to the churches and to the public.” (63-GS-18)

An integral part of our Christian faith is that God's love for all his children makes no distinction of worth between male and female. They are equal in value in God's sight; therefore, distinctions made by society which assume an inferior-superior relationship are contrary to the will of God. The right of each person to achieve his or her maximum potential as a child of God is basic to any understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We affirm the vital importance of the woman's role in the parent-child relationship; however, our society has locked most women into stereotyped roles as housekeepers and child-raisers without regard to their desires or abilities to perform other kinds of work. This has resulted in widespread discrimination in employment, job training, education, and compensation for work performed. Many a woman, sheltered by her husband's earnings and presence, never learns that discrimination exists until widowed or divorced. In great part women are excluded from better paying jobs, and in many instances they receive less pay for performing substantially the same work. Furthermore they are under-represented on church boards, in church pulpits, and on the staffs of the denomination's national and judicatory structures.

The health of the church, the family, and all institutions of our society depends on the contributions all can make; thus, to deny any group the right to fulfill its maximum potential is to deprive society of the most effective means for solving its increasingly complex problems.

Moreover, women have been the victims of injustice resulting from cultural patterns which have greatly restricted their freedom in the performance of their sexual roles. These act as restrictions upon men also, since our culture make assumptions about what are properly “male” interests and traits and what are properly “female.”

In the light of these considerations, the General Synod calls on the members, local churches, Conferences, Instrumentalities, and other national agencies of the United Church of Christ to:

1. Insist on increasing opportunities for women in theological education, ordination, voluntary roles, and employment at all levels of the church's life—as pastors, as national and judicatory staff, with equal pay for equal work, and as members and officers of the policy-making boards and agencies of the denomination.
2. Introduce into church and public school materials more information concerning the significant contributions women have made to our history and culture.
3. Offer the church as inspiration and forum to develop a social action program concerning women's rights and expectations.

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4. Work toward elimination of discrimination in employment and compensation on the basis of sex wherever it exists in our society.

5. Call on the United States Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on Political Rights of Women which is now pending before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

6. Work for easier access to contraceptive information and materials, and for legalization of physician-performed abortions during the early months of pregnancy.

7. Commend (without necessarily endorsing every claim, style, and proposal) the movements for women's rights for their contributions towards better understanding of the economic, cultural, and social injustices which have been inflicted upon the women in our society.

8. Affirm new life styles for our children which allow boys and girls to express their essential humanity and free their vocational prospects.

9. Recognize that there are other areas not covered in this document and deserving further study, especially those pertaining to the legal implications of the Equal Rights Amendment, such as military service, divorce, legal age, and property rights.

(71-GS-24)