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but not currently being included and moved the Overture be referred to the Executive Council. The motion was seconded. It was

75-GS-87 VOTED: The General Synod refers the Overture from the Wisconsin Conference on Year Book data to the Executive Council.

28. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATE TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE NEW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Moderator recognized President Moss who announced that in keeping with the vote of General Synod creating the office of Executive Associate to the President of the Church he would recommend to the new Executive Council the election of the Rev. C. Gordon Beale as Executive Associate to the President. He also reported that the new Executive Council had closed its nominations for officers and at its meeting would elect Mrs. Helen I. Barnhill, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as chairperson and Robert E. Dressler, Esq., of Portland, Oregon as vice-chairperson.

29. CONTINUATION OF THE REPORT OF DIVISION A, "MINISTRIES WITHIN AND FROM THE CHURCH—STATEMENT ON VITALITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH"

The Moderator recognized Mrs. Marilyn Breitling, chairperson of Division A, who reminded the delegates that the alternative statement on the Vitality of the Local Church had been moved, seconded, and amended by adopting a new Leadership paragraph of the Background Statement on the Vitality of the Local Church, Advance Materials, Section II, p. 50 which action on the statement had been deferred. It was

75-GS-88 VOTED: The General Synod adopts as amended the alternative statement on the Vitality of the Local Church:

VITALITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Believing that local church vitality is an issue of the greatest importance and

Affirming that God's call to commitment and service comes with a sense of intentionally shared covenant,

The 10th General Synod calls upon all Instrumentalities, Conferences, Associations, local congregations and seminaries to express in our common life the Biblical concept of intentional and shared covenant to the end that, the following actions be taken:

I. The 10th General Synod urges the Board for Homeland Ministries, the Office for Church Life and Leadership in collaboration with Conferences, Associations, and other appropriate Instrumentalities to give leadership and provide necessary funding to assist and support local churches through the following:

1. Enhancing the central role of worship in the life of the United Church of Christ through the development and sharing of resources;
2. Developing Area Mission Strategies;
3. Helping congregations plan and develop organizational strength;
4. Training and support of leadership;
5. Expanding the initial research in the area of church growth/loss and demographic patterns in the United

Church of Christ and interpreting their implications for use by the local church and other appropriate bodies;

6. Addressing the unique needs of the smaller churches of the United Church of Christ;

7. Continuing implementation of strategies for United Church of Christ churches in the central cities so their presence can be maintained and enhanced, with special attention to be given to churches in transition communities;

8. Developing strategies whereby the richness of our diverse ethnic and racial heritage may be shared and celebrated;

9. Exploring the forms of ecumenical collaboration through which the United Church of Christ congregations may pursue their life and mission.

II. The Tenth General Synod lauds the accomplishments of the Black Church Empowerment program developed by the Commission for Racial Justice and the Board for Homeland Ministries in conjunction with the Ministers for Racial and Social Justice and United Black Christians and urges the United Church of Christ to enlarge these efforts over the next biennium.

The local church is people who have committed themselves and their resources to act out a mission rooted in a biblical perspective. The local church embodies a vision of what society can and should become. It projects a view of transcendence in every aspect of life. A vital church balances the benefits to its members and participants with contributions to the larger society through individual work and program activity. Inevitably, where there is an imbalance, there is a corresponding loss of vitality. When local churches have lost vitality, we all have a problem. Thus, the problem of church vitality is one of restoring the connection between the needs and capabilities of church members and the needs and capabilities of people in the world.

A congregation is an association of people who are organized to carry out a variety of activities in light of a biblical interpretation of life. The degree of long-range viability of a congregation can be measured in terms of seven components:

1. The availability of people who are potential members;
2. A general biblical/theological perspective which is relevant to the needs, values and aspirations of members and potential members;
3. The availability of leaders who have the abilities and fulfill the various roles necessary for the needs of organizational innovation and maintenance;
4. Adequate organization to meet the needs and expectations of members and potential members;
5. Adequate facilities;
6. Adequate finances to support leadership, organizational and facility demands;
7. Supportive covenants among churches and with denominational instrumentalities.

Over the years, congregations have adopted a pattern in which these components were arranged with a fair amount of predictability as to success or failure. Today, however, we are faced with a number of changes which profoundly alter conventional patterns.

1. **People.** Relatively little is generally known about our present UCC constituency. Fortunately, several Board for

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Homeland Ministries' studies are yielding more comprehensive and useful information. In general the UCC constituency is aging. The Center for Social Action's recent national sampling of UCC members suggests a median age of 50 years. There can be little doubt that our average membership is rapidly approaching "middle-age." We are an ethnically inclusive denomination, a fact which makes us not only unique but strong. We are perceived as a liberal church in relation to the other denominations of American Protestantism. We are a middle and upper-middle class church; our members rank relatively high in occupational status, income, and educational achievement. We share with other denominations a family orientation. Congregational life and programming is built largely around the needs and expectations of family units.

A large proportion of the membership of the UCC is known to have come out of other denominational traditions. A 1963 survey of church members in Northern California indicated that fully 65 per cent of the members of "Congregational" churches in that area had been members of another denomination prior to joining a Congregational church, a far higher proportion of "in-migrants" than any of the nine other Protestant denominations studied. A subsequent national survey of the UCC laity yielded similar findings: 57 per cent of the members sampled had been raised in a denomination other than Congregational Christian or Evangelical and Reformed. Thus, while no doubt traditional denominational ties have played a major role in attracting persons to the UCC (and variation by region would undoubtedly be a major factor here) the majority of the present UCC constituency are "newcomers." The UCC has shown itself to be an attractive denominational home for large numbers of persons. To what extent should we seek to project from what we know about our present constituencies to what might be our potential constituencies in the future?

2. **Perspectives.** Closely linked with the constituency issue is the issue of values and perspectives. The past century in America has been characterized by an emerging, urban/industrial-oriented, middle-class with a high degree of common values and expectations. The similarities and differences among Protestant denominations have been closely tied to economic orientations. While the constituency and potential constituency of UCC-related denominations was seldom explicitly identified, the existence of "our kind of people" was major consideration in local church membership. However, there are indications of shifts in expectations among existing UCC members over the past ten years regarding the church's role in social justice. Other evidence indicates that while clergy who become social activists often find themselves at odds with the majority of laypeople, those laypersons who become socially active tend to drop out of the church. It may be that some of our potential constituents are ex-constituents.

The future character of the UCC depends in part on our responses to the pluralism of values found among subgroups in American society. How our congregations respond will determine the pace of church growth, the quality of relationships among UCC congregations and the kinds of mission activities pursued by churches and denominational instrumentalities.

LEADERSHIP

3. **Leadership.** The United Church of Christ falls into the Protestant tradition of 'the priesthood of all believers.' This means that leadership must be recruited from lay persons as

well as clergy. Lay leaders must work with clergy to plan, to organize, to push for goals and the means for reaching the goals. Lay leaders must work with the clergy to raise and manage money needed for the work of God. Lay leaders must work with clergy to recruit new people. This is a vital growth factor which cannot be cast off on the clergy.

The clergy hold essential responsibility in certain areas of leadership. They should provide a theological perspective. They should call God's people to an awareness of God's mission in the world. They should provide spiritual guidance and leadership. A viable, vital church is possible only when such leadership from both clergy and lay persons is present.

4. **Organization.** It has been characteristic of American churches that their services of worship are highly competitive with one another, although not competitive with other community activities. Special constituency programming tends also to be competitive, while special ministries and social action programs are often cooperative among several churches.

A congregation must organize around the life styles of its constituencies. Individuals interact with their locality. They shape the community and are influenced by it. A church must seek to perceive what the community's needs are. It must also ascertain the local resources. Both assessments can strengthen the programming of a congregation. One cannot overstate the importance of adequately conceptualizing the milieu in which a congregation has taken root. The denominational leadership has a very important consulting responsibility with regard to this task. Congregational life needs to become a seven-day-a-week affair to serve persons of the church and the locality. A wide range of activities need to be projected such as worship, day care, christian education, counselling, evangelism, housing concerns, pastoral calling and care for the elderly. The pastor carries a primary role and also becomes a catalyst for lay ministry.

Parish activities may be thought of as strategies which achieve both the internal and external goals of the congregation. In United Church tradition, the "meeting house" was the place where the faithful were nurtured and the common problems of the community faced. Congregations today must have this alternation of focus. It weaves together the cares, anxieties and aspirations of the membership with the life of the community. Its program life incorporates the hope of the Gospel in these intermingled human affairs.

5. **Facilities.** Many of our church buildings detract from the potential vitality of the congregation. They have increasingly high maintenance requirements, low potential for adaptability to multiple use and a low degree of attractiveness for new constituents. A number of innovative, community-oriented facilities have been constructed in the past few years. These designs need higher visibility as models for church development in the future.

6. **Finances.** The median size of the typical UCC church is 180 members. At \$120 per year, per capita, a typical annual budget is \$21,000. Such a budget is increasingly inadequate for support of full-time leadership and self-contained facilities. It is an economic reality that churches with full-time leaders and adequate facilities will have to be larger, on the average, than is now the case.

At the same time many of our congregations are growing, some at rapid rates. Data presently at hand suggest that those congregations which are growing at significantly high rates are located in communities with large numbers of

young families of high educational, income and occupational status and small minority populations. The churches themselves tend to be "builders," spending a high portion of their congregational budget on capital expenses and a relatively low proportion of their budgets on benevolences. There is no evidence that members of growing churches differ significantly from members of stable or declining churches on theological or social issues.

Since 1964 UCC basic support dollars available to national agencies of the UCC have declined 11.8 per cent. During the same period the purchasing power of the dollar (using 1967 as a base year) has declined from \$108.00 to \$64.97 (December 1974). The impact of inflation on the construction dollar has been even greater (a 39 per cent decline from 1967 to 1972 alone).

We face, therefore, the prospect of an era in which we have fewer dollars which buy less and at the same time increased needs and demands for services. The grim reality is that in a period when new sources of funds are most desperately needed, resources for congregations are sadly depleted.

7. Supportive Covenants. The United Church of Christ is a covenanting church. Members of congregations covenant with one another. Groups of congregations associate with one another for mutual support. Combinations of churches, church agencies and other groups coalesce to achieve mutually defined tasks and mission goals. The vitality of church life depends upon our freedom to associate, and through association continually to recreate the character of our common life.

Conclusion. Implicit throughout this discussion has been a view that in dealing with development of viable congregations, as with other areas of our denominational life, we need to have a vision of the church as we would like to see it in the year 2000. The shaping of this vision must involve the full breadth of the persons who comprise the UCC and those who are presently "outsiders." It must take seriously both questions of our heritage and mission and those of institutional viability.

IMPLICATIONS

1. Area strategies should be developed jointly by congregations, Conferences and Instrumentalities, projecting long-range plans for revitalizing and establishing communities of faith and for mission outreach.

2. Special attention should continue to be given to black and minority church recruitment and development.

3. Churches facing conditions of marginal viability should be given special attention through supportive relationships with Conferences and national Instrumentalities.

4. Leadership training and retraining programs in light of current needs should be conducted in seminaries and in local situations.

5. Research with regard to contemporary life styles and having implications for church recruitment and organization should be conducted.

6. Continual attention needs to be given to the meaning of faith in an institutional framework through consultations, seminars and publications.

7. Special attention should be given to local church giving and the ways by which overall denominational financing can be achieved in light of changing economic conditions.

8. New church development should be encouraged in light of cultural and social changes in the nation.

9. A concerted effort should be made to evaluate the costs and uses of church buildings in light of church program and mission needs.

10. A vision of the United Church for the future should be developed collaboratively by all elements in the denomination.

11. A reexamination of Christian education in local settings should be conducted which includes curriculum, scheduling, teaching methods as well as confirmation procedures.

12. Worship and celebration should be given high priority as creative moments in the life of the Christian community.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE STATEMENT ON THE VITALITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Since its inception in 1961 the United Church of Christ has earned a most deserved reputation as an inclusive and open church. It has mobilized its resources in a diligent effort to serve those in disadvantaged circumstances. The United Church of Christ has been in the vanguard of rectifying societal problems because it refuses to idolize dysfunctional dogmas and unrighteous alliances.

In the commitment the United Church of Christ has paid the telling, but not unforeseen price. Some predict that we are pricing ourselves out of existence. They are too hasty. More importantly, however, they infer that this price is not commensurate with the "true" meaning of the gospel. Those who espouse this doctrine want cheap grace. They too often forget that the Lord has called His Church to engage in redemptive suffering. He requires us to respond to His love by empathizing with our neighbor and not in sulking about our questionable deprivation.

We know that there are limitations to all honest and social amelioration, yet we also know when we have reached that limit. Our sacrifices then become a deadly and intolerable pain.

We are certain that the United Church has not broached this limit; moreover we are certain that the Church has the great responsibility and opportunity to so declare the gospel that it would speak to and empower all denied people with the Lord's message of corporate as well as personal redemption, growth and empowerment.

In 1971 the Eighth General Synod of the United Church of Christ endorsed the idea of empowering its Black Churches and mandated the program of empowerment to several agencies.

The adoption of this programmatic idea in 1971 (71 GS 52 Goal 4) was significant in that at that point in time the nation and its major institutions were caught up in the "benign neglect" response of the national, political administration to the needs of the Black community, notwithstanding the United Church of Christ responded positively to the call of empowering its local Black churches and did so in the following manner:

1. The development of educational resource material suitable for use in the Black Churches (Board for Homeland Ministries).
2. The development of Black Churches in transitional communities (Board for Homeland Ministries).
3. Action-oriented research, leadership development and training (Commission for Racial Justice).
4. Grant funding for Black Churches and Black service institutions (Board for Homeland Ministries and Commission for Racial Justice).

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All of these programs have been substantially implemented. A series of Corridor meetings embracing the Black constituency have been held whereby needs for empowerment were delineated and lifted up. Types of resources by which these needs might be met and training in the history, structure and polity of the United Church of Christ were an integral part of the session. Resource materials have been developed and training in the use of these materials have been carried out.

A model of minority church development in transitional communities has been firmly implemented in the Chicago community whereby future development can be greatly enhanced.

The grant funding portion of the Black Church Empowerment program has been exceedingly rewarding for many of our Black Churches, and related institutions have been able to develop and continue programs of significant impact through the resources provided, for example:

Franklinton Center, Enfield, North Carolina
The Church of the Good Shepherd, Chicago, Illinois
The Corona Congregational Church, Corona, N.Y.
Rush Memorial Church, Atlanta, Georgia
Eliot Congregational Church, Boston, Massachusetts
Ecumenical Metropolitan Ministry, Seattle, Washington
Pilgrim Congregational Church, Houston, Texas

and many others.

Out of this experience and fully aware of how much more needs to be done, the United Church of Christ should boldly continue the significant program of Black Church Empowerment and make available comparable dollar resources. Every local church, Conference and Association of the Church should be made aware of the validity of this program and the potential social change it harbors.

30. STATEMENT ON CONTINUING SEARCH FOR FAITH

The Moderator recognized Dr. Washburn. On behalf of the business committee, Dr. Washburn referred the delegates to Advance Materials, Section II, pp. 55-56, to the Background Statement on the Continuing Search for Faith and moved its adoption. The Moderator recognized Mrs. Breitling who moved to amend the motion to adopt the alternative statement on Continuing Search for Faith. The motion was seconded. It was

75-GS-89 VOTED: The General Synod adopts the alternative statement on Continuing Search for Faith:

CONTINUING SEARCH FOR FAITH

WHEREAS General Synod reaffirms the continuing presence and power of God at work in the world;

WHEREAS General Synod affirms a Christian witness as evident in the history of the U.C.C. as a significant part of our national heritage;

WHEREAS General Synod affirms the need to strengthen our own faith by acknowledging the testimony and witness of our forebearers;

THEREFORE General Synod recommends that the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, in consultation with the Historical Council and other appropriate agencies, continue to make available to the churches materials that illuminate the richness of the U.C.C. heritage, give new direction to the mission, and provide spiritual dimension for the future of the church.

WHEREAS General Synod wants to know the word, spread the word and do the word;

WHEREAS General Synod affirms that Jesus Christ is Lord;

THEREFORE General Synod recommends that the Instrumentalities continue to develop and integrate programs (such as Faith Exploration, ACTS Evangelism, and other Christian education endeavors), materials, and structural relationships to reflect the theme of the Centrality of Christ in Contemporary Experience.

WHEREAS Diverse groups of citizens throughout the nation will be focussing on the issues outlined by the American Issues Forum Calendar, opportunity for wide involvement in exploration of serious issues affecting our nation is being occasioned, and

WHEREAS "Our Heritage, Our Hope" program provides an opportunity for Christian witness;

THEREFORE General Synod recommends that the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries continue to develop the American Issues Forum. "Our Heritage, Our Hope" is an American Issues Forum program consisting of nine program packets.*

Our search for faith rests on a deeper trust—the trust that faith is always possible even though it is not always evident. This trust underlies our church participation in seasons of dryness as well as in seasons of abundance. It underlies our mission activity in times when all connections between faith and action are not explicitly clear. And it underlies our personal struggles to live in light of the gospel during periods of changing values and expectations.

Faith can be described as that fusion of our intuitions about self, society and gospel which illuminates reality and bestows meaning on our existence. While we often speak of the search for faith, we also recognize that faith is a gift of grace—an overwhelming insight that is ours despite our efforts to capture it, or to elude it.

One of our modern-day theologians has characterized the time in which we live as "moving toward an increasing readi-

(*Explanation: Each packet will consist of one 30-minute tape cassette edited from interviews with distinguished persons who have particular expertise and commitment to the issue, along with a person who would represent the average citizen. The cassette would be accompanied by a study guide and background material developed for each of the nine issues. This program is integrated with a series of nine radio tapes that would also be available the first of each month, free of charge, to the local stations for local public service broadcasts. The broadcast tape would be the same as the study tape in the packet. Local groups are encouraged to contact their local radio stations and urge their use of the broadcast tapes. Emphasis would be placed on the first week of each month dealing broadly with the issue for that month.

This project will be sponsored by the National Parent-Teachers Association, the Educational Commission of the States and the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. The Board for Homeland Ministries will act as fiscal agent and developer of the project, study, and radio series which will jointly sponsor with the National Parent-Teacher Association; and make this resource available to all our churches as soon as possible.)