

MONDAY MORNING, JULY 4

- b. to consult among members of the United Church of Christ and other religious bodies who are active in communications industries to share concern for the ethical standards of their industries.

10. *Calls* upon the Office of Communication, the United Church Boards for World and Homeland Ministries and the Office of Church in Society:

- a. to continue to foster the education of persons from developing countries and under-represented social groups—including the church itself—for careers in communications.
- b. to engage in a continuous study of constitutional rights, regulatory codes and procedures, and freedom of access by publics (U.S.A. and other nations) relating to the electronic spectrum.

Responsibility for Implementation

Implementation of this pronouncement shall be referred to the Office of Communication which will, in turn, involve such other UCC agencies and elements of other churches that have the resources to help implement it.

6. TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

Mr. Eckert then presented the Overture to General Synod 11 on Television Programming submitted by the Northwest Association of the Ohio Conference.

The delegation from Ohio did not support the Overture.

WHEREAS television programs have a tremendous impact on the morality and immorality of our nation, and

WHEREAS the present trend in our society is toward shocking immorality, and

WHEREAS television programs have a responsibility to people and to the nation as a whole because of their unprecedented capacity as a communication to promote the general welfare of our nation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 14th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Ohio Association of the Ohio Conference, United Church of Christ, meeting at Pilgrim Church of the United Church of Christ, Toledo, Ohio, April 22-23, 1977, Overture the 11th General Synod of the United Church of Christ, as a participating member of the National Council of Churches, to establish a Reaction Committee that will:

- A. Receive and review documented complaints of television programs from local congregations; and
- B. Publish a list of programs so reviewed along with the reactions of local congregations; and
- C. Provide leadership in promoting a Voluntary Viewing Ban of television programs that
 1. contribute to delinquency, and
 2. contribute to mental depression; and
- D. Urge members of local congregations to write letters of protest to sponsors of violent programs, and urge boycott of the products of these sponsors.

It was 77-GS-31 VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod defeats the Overture submitted by the Northwest Association of the Ohio Conference.

7. VITALITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Mr. Eckert called attention to the "Report on the Vitality of the Local Church" for the Eleventh General Synod (Advance Materials Section II, pp. 74-75) and the Recommendation submitted by Division F, Small Group 2. It was

77-GS-32 VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod receives the "Report on the Vitality of the Local Church" and adopts the following recommendations.

Recommendation on the Vitality of the Local Church

Concern for the vitality of the local church has marked the history of the United Church of Christ. The Constitution affirms that the local church is the basic unit of the life and work of the United Church of Christ. Previous General Synods, in their designated priorities, have included a concern for the vitality of the local church.

Each local church, as a community of faith, carries out a double ministry. It ministers to its members, and it ministers to the world. As it carries out this double task, the local church is not an isolated reality, but is dynamically related to the denomination. The local church is enabled in its ministry, both to its members and its world, through its denomination, and is supported in that ministry by the denomination. Thus, the vitality of the local church and the vitality of the denomination are interrelated.

In order to develop a future vitality of the local church, it is necessary to establish a working foundation which includes the following factors:

1. Nurturing of present *membership* and enlistment of new members.
2. *Worship* that celebrates the common life of the people.
3. A program of *pastoral care* and nurture to encourage growth in faith.
4. The pursuit of *mission* through which the congregation reaches out into the world.
5. Effective lay and clergy *leaders* who have the ability to fulfill the congregations' needs.
6. A functional organizational structure that provides adequate *facilities* and *finances*.

In response to the priority of the Tenth General Synod, various programs and activities in these areas have been created and implemented by national agencies and Conferences. However, we *CALL UPON* those national agencies, Conferences and Associations to critically evaluate how effective their programs have been in building a viable base of local church strength.

While the issue of vitality is closely related to these fundamental matters, it is nevertheless necessary to distinguish it from them. Viability relates to that which is necessary for existence. Vitality relates to the quality of the life of the local church, to its spirit. A description of a vital local church would include:

A congregation whose members

- have a positive image of their local church,
- are related to the wider church,
- can articulate the local church's purpose, its mission, its view of what it is that God is calling it to be and to do,

MONDAY MORNING, JULY 4

—and, make effective use of the available resources in pursuit of the church's mission.

The vitality of the church can be diminished by the absence of any or all of these four characteristics.

Most important, the vitality of the local church is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a means to a greater end—that the churches might be faithful servants of God on behalf of God's world and God's creation.

In the interest of the vitality of the local church, the Eleventh General Synod *URGES* all national agencies, Conferences, Associations to give leadership and funding to:

1. Aid local churches to develop a sound theological base for their communal life.
2. Provide aids for creative worship and such unique celebrations as teacher recognition, and other forms of service to the church.
3. Offer leadership training and re-training for clergy and laypersons.
4. Strengthen local church relationship to the United Church of Christ so that it has a perspective of the national, Conference and Association levels as being complementary, parts of the whole church.
5. Make available programs in Christian and mission education, social action, evangelism and stewardship.
6. Help local churches to establish and realistically attain their own goals.
7. Provide models for local churches to follow by studying and understanding the makeup of the vital church.

In the United Church of Christ, there is a rich diversity among our local churches. That diversity relates to their composition, settings, size, resources, heritage or tradition, and leadership. Diversity needs to be honored and affirmed, even as it makes each congregation unique.

The Eleventh General Synod is concerned about the vitality of the *whole* United Church of Christ. Therefore, it *CALLS UPON* the national agencies, Conferences and Associations to implement specialized programs and ministries to enhance the vitality of:

1. Declining large churches
2. Smaller membership churches
3. Churches of the center cities
4. Ethnic churches
5. Emerging churches in new geographical areas
6. Alternate lifestyles and issues of human sexuality within the life of a single congregation.

Furthermore, we, the Eleventh General Synod, *BELIEVE* that active and meaningful work must be accomplished to seek those who, for one reason or another, are not presently reached by our ministries, especially in the area of traditionally bypassed and young adult segments of our society.

8. REPORT ON M POWER AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON STEWARDSHIP

Mr. Eckert presented the "Report on *M Power*" and "proposal on Stewardship" (Advance Materials Section II, pp. 81-85) and moved its adoption.

Doris Rikert, (VT), read her *M Power*, and another delegate read "*M Power Is*" from the floor.

It was then moved, seconded, and

77—GS-33a VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod amends the first recommendation of the Stewardship Proposal by deleting all of the sentence after "church", to read "Identifies stewardship as an issue of vital concern to the whole church."

The Moderator called for action on the Report and the proposal.

77-GS-33 VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod receives the "Report on *M Power*" and recommendations on Stewardship as amended.

Recommendations on Stewardship

In response to God's continuing grace and the needs of the world, and in awareness of the opportunities we have to increase our faithfulness to the Gospel by increasing our support for the total mission of the United Church of Christ, the Eleventh General Synod, looking ahead to the 1978-79 biennium:

- 1) Identifies stewardship as an issue of vital concern to the whole church.
- 2) Continues the *M Power* (Stewards in Support of Mission) program adopted by the Tenth General Synod.
- 3) Encourages conferences and local churches which have not already participated in *M Power* to do so.
- 4) Instructs the Stewardship Council, the United Church Board for World Ministries, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, and the Office for Church Life and Leadership to continue their collaborative efforts to produce coordinated stewardship resources.

9. WORSHIP SERVICE

The Moderator called the Order of the Day at 10:00 a.m. for the conduct of the Worship Service. The theme was "Telling the Story of Liberation". Richard Eick and A. Knighton Stanley, pastors from the Potomac Association were narrators. Clyde Parker directed a choir from Westmoreland and Peoples Church of Washington, D.C., in choral numbers from the *Amistad Opera* with music by Roger Ames and libretto by Virginia Artist.

The Moderator called for action of the General Synod to suspend the rule and change the Order of the Day to deal with the Overture in Division B.

10. GRATITUDE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Chairperson of Division B, Franklin Thomas, called attention to the Overture: "Gratitude for Religious Freedom" (Advance Materials, Section II, pp. 123-124), and the Resolution, Exhibit 6, distributed to the delegates on Sunday evening.

Mr. Thomas moved the adoption of the Resolution as distributed to the delegates. He noted that this Resolution is substituted for the Overture in the Advance Materials. It was

77-GS-34 VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod adopts