

MONDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 4

RESOLVED, That dual-role (or tent-maker) ministry, a long standing form of professional service within our Christian tradition, warrants consideration by Association and/or Conference Committees on Ministry in the United Church of Christ;

RESOLVED, That the Office for Church Life and Leadership study the development of such ministerial styles for churches and clergy, such as the pilot project, CODE (Clergy Occupational Development and Employment) and promote theological reflection on the matter of the future shape of ministry.

RESOLVED, That learnings and understandings of these discussions be disseminated to the local churches, associations and conferences for review.

17. RESOLUTION ON DISCIPLES/UCC CONVERSATIONS

Mr. Rath was recognized by the Assistant Moderator and referred the delegates to the Advance Materials, Section II, page 20. He moved the adoption of the "Resolution on Disciples/UCC Conversations" as presented. The motion was seconded and there was some discussion.

In accordance with Standing Rule 16 the question of financial implications was raised and Mr. Rath indicated that the amount would come to approximately \$3,000. He spoke in favor of the resolution on behalf of the Division. Upon being put to a vote, it was

77-GS-51 VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod adopts the "Resolution on Disciples/UCC Conversations."

Resolution on Disciples/UCC Conversations

The Eleventh General Synod adopts the following resolution: BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ authorize conversations to explore the possible union of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.
2. That a two year exploration regarding union be made together at all levels of the life of these two churches.
3. That such exploration focus upon issues related to the Church's calling to reconciliation, unity, and mission, and the appropriateness of church union in these times.
4. That the Council on Christian Unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Council on Ecumenism of the United Church of Christ be given the joint responsibility of facilitating these conversations and for reporting their implications to the 1979 General Synod and General Assembly of these two churches.

18. INTRODUCTION OF KENNETH TEEGARDEN

Assistant Moderator Bryant recognized President Joseph Evans for a Point of Personal Privilege. Mr. Evans introduced Kenneth Teegarden, President of the Disciples of Christ. Mr. Teegarden expressed a few words to the General Synod and indicated that the Disciples of Christ

would be holding their General Assembly in Kansas City later this year and would be taking action on the same resolution just passed. He thanked everyone for the very gracious and warm welcome he and his wife, Wanda, had felt during their stay at General Synod.

19. THE CHURCH AND PERSONS WITH HANDICAPS

Mr. Rath referred the delegates to the Advance Materials, Section II, page 116-117 and the Pronouncement C entitled: "The Church and the Handicapped." He moved for the adoption of this Resolution. The motion was seconded. There was supportive discussion which followed as it was noted that consciousness and sensitivity to the needs of handicapped persons needs to be raised within our local churches. There were many who urged the adoption of this resolution by the General Synod.

Allen MacLean (NY) asked for the Privilege of Voice for two personal testimonies—Virginia Kreyer, Chairperson of the New York Conference Metropolitan Association Task Force on Exceptional People, and Harold Wilke of the Healing Community. Each gave a moving expression of concern to the General Synod about handicapped persons.

Barbara Backman, (CONN), moved a friendly amendment to line 32 of the Pronouncement. It was seconded and

77-GS-52a VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod amends "The Church and Persons with Handicaps" by adding, "and to remove all physical barriers to this end." to line 32. The discussion was called to a close and it was

77-GS-52 VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod adopts "The Church and Persons With Handicaps" as amended.

The Church and Persons With Handicaps

Background

One tenth of all Americans are physically and mentally handicapped* and most are not seen in church because of attitudinal or architectural barriers. Many are confined at home, with relatively few in institutions. This task force asks, on their behalf, the United Church to consider their need for participation within the mainstream of community and church life, and calls for special study and action by the congregations, Conferences and the General Synod.

The church community should focus on the needs of all kinds of disadvantaged persons, especially the handicapped, as voiced in resolutions by several denominations.

The church should support the statement of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya, November 1975, which say in part:

"The church cannot exemplify 'the full humanity revealed in Christ,' bear witness to the interdependence of humankind, or achieve unity in diversity if it continues to acquiesce in the social isolation of disabled persons and to deny them full participation in its life. The unity of the family of God is handicapped where these brothers and sisters are treated as objects of condescending charity. It is broken where they are left out."

*Preface, The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Public Law 93-112.

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The word "handicapped" is defined by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare to "mean mentally retarded, hard of hearing, deaf, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, crippled or other health impaired" persons. Public Law 91-230 Education of the Handicapped Act.

Theological Rationale

The Christian church is a community of faith responding to God's healing, reconciling, and empowering work in Christ. The mission of Jesus meant good news for the poor, release for captives, recovering of sight for the blind, and freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:18). As signs of his ministry Jesus pointed to its gifts for the blind and the lame, lepers, the deaf, even the dead (Matthew 1:4-6). Christ's followers are called to continue the ministry of reconciliation that God carried out in him (2 Cor. 5:18).

Christian faith has always recognized both the glory and frailty of human life. Our glory is that God has created us in the divine image and called us to be his ministers. Our frailty is evident in our dependence in infancy and old age and in our vulnerability throughout all of life.

Christ addresses us in our strength and in our weakness. He reminds us that we human beings need one another. It is our responsibility and our opportunity to strengthen and heal one another within the human family. Especially within the church we recognize that "if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor. 12:26). And the church, in this respect, makes us aware of the kingdom of God, with its claim upon and its promise for all humanity.

Within the human society are some people identified in common language and in public law as handicapped. They bear in evident and painful ways the fragility of all life. The strongest of human beings are at any moment only a microbe or an accident away from the ailments and disabilities that are conspicuous in others. The mingling of strength and frailty in the human race and in every individual are constant reminders of three aspects of our Christian ministry.

First, there is a ministry of the whole church to the handicapped. It is a quite specific continuation of the ministry of Jesus, who healed the sick and who told his followers that their ministry to the sick was a ministry to him (Mt. 25:31-46).

Second, there is a ministry of the handicapped to the church and to humanity. Their presence is a reminder that Christ was a suffering servant, "despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). They are likewise a reminder of Christ's foremost apostle, who when he prayed for relief from his own affliction heard God's response: "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9)

Third, there is a ministry of the church to all those who suffer hardness of heart toward the handicapped. More people than realize it have a hidden hostility toward the handicapped and would even like to blame them for their handicaps, perhaps because they resent the reminder of the frailty of all flesh. To those who think they are well, the church has a ministry of judgment and healing.

Our contemporary society has a special need for the ministry of the handicapped and to the handicapped. This is a success-oriented society. It rejoices—rightly, in part—in the conquest of many ailments that have burdened past generations of humanity. But in its achievements our society often concentrates on health as a norm, at the cost of intolerance of human ailments. It sees suffering as the enemy to overcome, forgetting that suffering may be a means of grace for sufferers and those around them. It often hides away the handicapped or pushes them to the fringes of society, lest they intrude on the superficial happiness of others. It represses the nearness and presence of death.

Sometimes, in a travesty on Christian faith, it even locates human dignity in normality and achievement. Thus even its well-intended compassion for the handicapped is too often a condescending goodness of the well to the ill and disabled rather than a recognition by all of the dignity that by God's grace we share. In traditional Christian faith human dignity has often been described as "alien dignity"—not the dignity of ambitious achievers but the dignity of creatures whom God loves and calls into divine-human community. In that community each of us has the opportunity, as Henry Nouwen puts it, to become the "wounded healer" for others.

As the church learns to recognize human weakness-in-strength and strength-in-weakness, it begins to discover "the cost and joy of discipleship." It finds that the sharing of burdens is the sharing of opportunities. It witnesses to God's gracious love.

Recognizing the distinguished contributions persons with handicaps are making to society in various fields;

Aware of the suffering of persons with handicaps due to rejection and insufficient support;

Cognizant of the wealth of new understandings about societal attitudes toward persons with disabilities;

Observing that a direct result of our high risk technological society is an increasing number of persons with handicaps;

Affirming the need for a positive attitudinal and behavioral response to persons with handicaps;

Acknowledging the vital support and facilitating role the Church could play in their social integration by initiating more empathetic, and creative, ministries with and to persons with handicaps and their families, as in church school curricula, attention to removal of environmental and architectural barriers, provision for regional conferences and retreats, intentional listening to persons with handicaps and honoring their living demonstrations of accomplishment; and *believing* that the unity of the family of God is handicapped where these brothers and sisters are treated as objects of condescending charity and derision, and that the unity is broken when they are left out.

The 11th General Synod of the United Church of Christ therefore, resolves:

1. To undertake at local, association, conference and national levels study of the role of persons with handicaps through groups made up of persons who are handicapped and those who are not. The

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church at all levels should utilize available resources and information of public and voluntary agencies and determine how best to motivate the caring concern of congregations in order to minister with and to persons with handicaps, and to remove all physical barriers to this end.

2. To encourage the local congregations, associations, conferences, related schools and institutions, and national bodies of the United Church of Christ to implement the full range of professional and non-professional employment of persons with handicaps.
3. To call upon each local congregation of the United Church of Christ to take affirmative action assuring the full integration of persons with handicaps into membership of the Christian fellowship at all levels, encouraging their full participation in the church and society, so that they may realize their full potential.
4. To encourage individuals with handicaps, along with their families, to become part of the ongoing life of the Church. Work may be needed in helping persons with handicaps to grow socially, emotionally, and spiritually, thus acknowledging that both their struggles and gifts are important to the Christian community.
5. To direct the Executive Council to negotiate with the appropriate U.C.C. agencies regarding work with persons with handicaps in order to facilitate the organization of our efforts and to offer a progress report to the 12th General Synod.

20. HILTON RESPONSIVE TO PERSONS WITH HANDICAPS

Assistant Moderator Bryant recognized President Joseph Evans for a Point of Personal Privilege. Gordon Beale had met with the management of the Hilton Hotel and with the Committee of Persons Concerned with the Needs of the Handicapped regarding the facilities of this hotel. Mr. Evans had received a letter from Henry Van Buren, Sales Manager of the Washington Hilton, indicating that the Hilton has been responsive to the needs of the handicapped person over the past years. They currently have on order a new permanent Braille system for the operation of the elevators.

21. RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF OUR CLOSELY RELATED SEMINARIES

Mr. Rath was recognized by the Assistant Moderator and referred the delegates to the printed materials which should be before them. He moved for the adoption of the "Resolution in Support of our Closely Related Seminaries." The motion was seconded. It was

77-GS-53 VOTED: The Eleventh General Synod adopts the "Resolution in Support of our Closely Related Seminaries."

Resolution in Support of Our Closely Related Seminaries

Whereas, The United Church of Christ has as its heritage the tradition of providing theologically skilled and compe-

tent pastoral leadership which is integral to the mission and purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ;

Whereas, The General Synod of the United Church of Christ has affirmed the life and work of seven (7) seminaries—Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, Bangor Theological Seminary, Chicago Theological Seminary, Eden Theological Seminary, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Pacific School of Religion and United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities—these seminaries have chosen to be "closely related," meaning, they wish to be known as United Church of Christ Seminaries;

Whereas, The Ninth General Synod recommended a support program for seminaries "closely related" in which responsibility rests upon Conferences, Associations and local congregations, which we affirm;

Whereas, The Tenth General Synod in 1975 recommended and urged local churches to adopt the goal of a minimum of two percent (2%) of their current expense budget for Basic Support of the closely related seminaries and requested the Office for Church Life and Leadership with the Conference and seminaries to develop a functioning program of regional support for the closely related seminaries during the biennium for report to the Eleventh General Synod;

Whereas, The Eleventh General Synod was requested to evaluate the effectiveness of this program and directed the Office for Church Life and Leadership to provide statistical data for the delegates in order that this be accomplished;

Whereas, A report was provided to the Eleventh General Synod by the Office for Church Life and Leadership prepared with the cooperation of the seven closely related seminaries in response to the action of the Tenth General Synod;

Whereas, The report was reviewed and evaluated at the Eleventh General Synod in consultation with representatives of the seminaries and the Office for Church Life and Leadership;

Whereas, Four regional support areas have been delineated including (1) "A regional support plan for Lancaster Theological Seminary," involving the four Pennsylvania Conferences, The Central Atlantic Conference, The New York Conference, and the Southern Conference; (2) a "regional seminary support group" composed of the six New England Regional Conferences benefitting Bangor Seminary, and Andover Newton Theological School; (3) cue mid-America seminaries program which supports Chicago, Eden and United seminaries involving a support area of sixteen Conferences; and (4) the Western part of the country served by the Pacific School of Religion; and

Whereas, Supportive funds for general operating budgets for these seminaries are urgently needed, and it is our desire to affirm the uniqueness of theology, style and stance of our denomination to which these institutions are committed; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Eleventh General Synod

1. Affirms the actions of the Ninth and Tenth General Synods recognizing and encouraging the development of regional support plans for the closely related seminaries;