

FRIDAY EVENING, JUNE 22

are the new and free people in Jesus Christ who have come to join the vision that you helped to shape.

As we see you now many thoughts flood our minds too. For instance, we are thinking that there is no one who says 'United Church of Christ' just as you do, words in a stream as though you were saying something that is in your blood. And we are reflecting too about something as inherently you as the way you stand. You stand with Strength unguarded only before God, vigilant for the integrity of the Church.

Every gathering of the Church in which you have stood to speak has learned that you are belovedly stubborn for the Lord, that you will not plead for the Gospel with anything less than a dedicated pugnacity. You have a severe sense of justice and that has nourished us, Sheldon. And like a surprise of grace we know you too as a warm tender supportive friend far more mellow than the reputation that has gone before you.

Just think of it, a child of Christ Church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a pastor for many years, a Synod President of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, Assistant to the President of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, Secretary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, Co-Secretary of the United Church of Christ, Executive Secretary of the Stewardship Council since 1957, think of it, and so much more.

To all of that we want simply to say 'thanks be to God.' You have been a good and faithful minister of Jesus Christ in our midst. You have been a theologian of this Church, our mentor in the high calling of liturgical worship, a leader, a planner, an advocate, a wise counsellor, and as you yourself would put it, a person who has had some things to say from time to time.

You have stumped for the whole mission for the whole Church and in that you have paced us all. You are so much an artist of the apt and the vivid word that many may not know that your sense of good art is one of the essential things about you. You have kept so well the score of our stewardship in the life of the United Church of Christ that many do not know that you are preoccupied with your own impressive scores on golf courses all over this land. In fact, gathered here with you today is a whole bevy of golf partners who are ungrudging in counting you as a friend and who are absolutely convinced that they can out drive and out putt you any time you can get away from your retirement duties for nine or eighteen holes.

You would want us to be theologically faithful even at this intimate moment and so the refrain 'thanks be to God'. But we believe there is another phrase that is theologically faithful, 'Thank you, Sheldon, thank you.' May you, Marie, the children, and the grandchildren, enjoy to the full the new territory into which you have now stepped. Grace and joy to you in the daily round, and around the courses, and around the United Church of Christ your habitat. And here in this hand, representing the hands of all the members of this Covenant is a warm welcome to this General Synod and all Synods to come.

Avery Post, President"

Mr. Mackey was recognized and received the applause of the General Synod

5. REPORT OF THE WILMINGTON TEN COMMITTEE

Mr. Myers indicated the report of the Wilmington Ten Committee, a sub-committee of the Executive Council, would be made by its chairperson, Milton O. Wordal. Mr. Wordal indicated that a report of the Wilmington Ten Mobilization and Education Campaign for the biennium would be distributed to the delegates. He reported that the Wilmington Ten still stand convicted by the courts of North Carolina, a record that will follow them through their future unless the vindication we have pledged is achieved. Ben Chavis, though attending Duke Divinity School on a release program is still in fact a prisoner of the state of North Carolina, not eligible for parole until 1980. Eight of the ten who were paroled last year remain prisoners of the restrictions of parole as well as their records of conviction but are struggling successfully with the challenge of their return to community. The legal battle is drawn in the Federal District Court where as recently as Tuesday of this week in a disappointing though expected decision, Judge Dupree of the Federal District Court of Eastern North Carolina rejected their plea for freedom, a decision to be challenged on appeal. On behalf of the Executive Council Mr. Wordal proposed a resolution on the Wilmington Ten. It was

79-GS-10 VOTED: The Twelfth General Synod of the United Church of Christ expresses its deep disappointment at the adverse decision of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, entered on the eve of this General Synod meeting, denying the Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus filed in behalf of the Wilmington Ten over three years ago. Although not entirely unexpected, this decision was reached despite support of the position of the Wilmington Ten by the United States Justice Department in the form of an *Amicus Curiae* brief filed last November. The Twelfth General Synod reaffirms its demand for the release of Ben Chavis and vindication of the Wilmington Ten and calls upon the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals to act expeditiously on the appeal to reverse this clearly erroneous ruling by the District Court.

Mr. Myers called on President Post who said that at a future General Synod, the Rev. Ben Chavis, still incarcerated in the state of North Carolina, will be with us and we will rejoice. Mr. Post said that many have raised their voices on behalf of the Wilmington Ten but literally no person has done that more eloquently than Mrs. Elizabeth Chavis, the mother of Ben Chavis, whom he introduced to the General Synod. Mrs. Chavis made brief remarks and thanked the United Church of Christ for standing steadfast in support of the Wilmington Ten and the cause of racial justice. On behalf of her son whom she visited recently she brought his greetings and expression of appreciation to the General Synod.

Mr. Wordal, as chairperson of the Wilmington Ten Committee, indicated that it was his privilege to make two additional introductions. He presented Reginald Epps, a senior at St. Augustine College and Wayne Moore, a senior at Shaw University, members of the Wilmington Ten, who received the applause of the General Synod.