

## MONDAY MORNING, JUNE 25

distribution, and conservation of scarce energy resources.

### IV. Program

The Twelfth General Synod, recognizing the centrality of energy conservation and production to the human concerns of the Christian faith, recommends the following:

1. That the above mentioned principles concerning energy be incorporated throughout the structures of the church.
2. That the appropriate agencies on the conference and national level gather accurate information on energy related issues and make it available to local churches through existing publications and channels of communication.
3. That local congregations, conferences, and national agencies, using all available means, to the best of their ability, seek to reduce energy usage for the next two years.
4. That the instrumentalities and agencies related to the United Church of Christ establish and implement an investment policy which would support the development of renewable energy and seek to avoid financial involvement in companies having interests in nuclear fission power production.
5. That the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries in cooperation with the Committee on Ecology and Christian Lifestyle be requested to monitor this effort and report to the Executive Council in the first year and General Synod 13 at the end of the biennium.
6. That the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries in cooperation with the Committee on Ecology and Christian Lifestyle be requested to recruit selected congregations to participate in a voluntary monitored program of energy conservation and management which other congregations can adapt to their use. (e.g. the Local Church Energy Watch program)

### 9. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PRONOUNCEMENT ON RURAL AMERICA: LIFE AND ISSUES

The Moderator recognized Mr. Vernard Frederick (ND), Chairperson of the Committee on Rural America: Life and Issues for the report. Mr. Frederick moved the adoption of the Pronouncement as revised and spoke to the report indicating the revised document is different from the document mailed to the delegates only in word and sentence changes. There was discussion, and it was:

79-GS-30 VOTED: The Twelfth General Synod adopts the Pronouncement on Rural America: Life and Issues as revised:

#### THE PRONOUNCEMENT ON RURAL AMERICA: LIFE AND ISSUES

##### I. Summary

This Pronouncement calls attention to four major areas of rural life and recommends policy statements which:

—Call for stewardship of natural resources:

- Support the strengthening of rural business economics while similarly affirming the right of workers to equity and justice.
- Renew support of the small and medium sized family farm as the predominant unit in American agriculture.
- Call for greater effort by government and the private sector to improve community services, cultivate human resources without discrimination and encourage community organization and development.

##### II. Background

Through its local churches the United Church of Christ and its predecessor bodies have served the spiritual and social needs of persons and communities in rural America. In recent General Synods, there have been references to aspects of life in rural America. Of particular note are the General Synod Ten and Eleven statements on health care, Christian life style and ecology, world hunger and energy.

Recognizing the need for a major policy statement on the quality of life in rural America, the General Synod Eleven in its statement on the "Quality of Life in Rural America" called upon the Office for Church In Society (OCIS) to develop such a statement for the consideration of the Twelfth General Synod. OCIS coordinated a national advisory committee, including representatives from eighteen conferences and four national agencies, to prepare this pronouncement.

##### III. Mandates of Faith

In every time and place, the Church is called to declare and embody the saving Word of God. This Word is the good news of the Gospel; the assurance that in spite of all contrary appearances, God's forgiving and transforming love is at work to make all things new in Christ. Received by faith through grace, this good news transforms and renews the Church in the covenant of God's faithful People. The People of God respond by giving thanks, by seeking to re-order their individual and corporate lives according to God's will and by making this good news known to others, that they too will hear and believe.

Like all local churches, rural congregations in modern America are called to a life of worship, prayer, community formation and service. The special call of God to the rural congregation is to bear the word of judgement and promise regarding the care of the land and other natural resources, rural employment and business, the conduct of agriculture and the development of community, human services and leadership.

##### A. *The Use and Care of the Land: From Tending the Garden to Exploiting Natural Resources to Responsible Stewardship*

According to the biblical account of creation (Genesis 1,2) God intends a harmony between human life and nature, a harmony which is broken by human disobedience. A part of God's promised restoration is a homeland for the wandering and enslaved people (Genesis 12:7, Exodus 33:1-3). The Exodus and the Exile—gaining the land and losing the land through disobedience, refusing to heed the warnings of the prophets—become the focal experiences for the vision of a New Age in which peace and justice will prevail among all people and in all creation (Isaiah 2:2-4, 55; Micah 4; In the New Testament Jesus Christ both announces and initiates

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this New Age (Mark 1:14-15) in which the outcasts and dispossessed will inherit the earth (Matthew 5) while the proud and mighty will become the dispossessed (Luke 1: 51-55). This New Age will be a time of new society, a new city (Revelation 21) in which sin will finally be overcome.

Caring for and living in harmony with nature have been important visions for the people of God which they have tried to express in many ways: observing the rhythms of productivity and rest required for the renewal of the land—the Sabbath and the Year of the Jubilee (Exodus 16:23-29; 20:8-11; Leviticus 25:4-17); distributing the resources of the land for the poor and oppressed (Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 15:26); and by working for greater productivity and efficiency in farming. This vision has been marred by the human desire to dominate and exploit nature. Especially in the modern period of sophisticated agricultural and resource management technologies, with growing populations and demands for goods, long-range care of the land and other natural resources has suffered. While the environmental movement has called attention to the profound dangers in such exploitation and while major legal safeguards have been enacted to limit the pollution of the air, water and land, the mood of exploitation continues to be fed by increasing demands for energy, food and corporate profits.

To return from exploitation to caring for the land cannot mean, however, a return to pre-modern agricultural and resource technologies. Faithfulness to the promise of God's New Age means moving forward in hope using scientific technology in ways which will maintain productivity and promise the renewal of the land and water for future generations. Caring for the land and its resources also means recovering the meaning of stewardship—the awareness that resources and technologies are God's gifts, entrusted to wise human management for the good of all, not private possessions to be used however the "owners" see fit.

Rural churches have special obligations and opportunities to bear this message of judgement and promise in rural America, where respect for the land and resources struggles against powerful forces of exploitation. In fact, both rural and urban churches carry the responsibility of proclaiming the call to responsible stewardship.

### *B. Rural Business and Employment: From Vocation to Labor and Profits to the Promise*

Human disobedience depicted in Genesis results in the consequence of change in the meaning of work from tending the garden to the necessity of earning a living by "the sweat of the brow" (Genesis 3:19). Along with this sense of the rigors of the work required to extract a living from a harsh environment has gone the affirmation that work has special meaning for God's people: the work of liturgical celebration (Matthew 4:10); the work of preaching and teaching (Ephesians 4:12); the work of caring for the poor and afflicted (Acts 6:1-6); the work of evangelism (Ephesians 4:11); the work of providing material necessities for all people (Matthew 19:21); and the work of ordering society justly (Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 12:17-21). All of these special meanings of "work" point back to the faithful tending of the garden before the fall and point ahead to the proper vocation of God's people in the New Age. In the Protestant

Reformation Martin Luther emphasized the divinely grounded dignity of all useful labor as the primary meaning of Christian vocation, against the view that "vocation" meant entering a religious order. In every society shaped by Christian values work has been affirmed as one of the ways to express gratitude for God's grace and obedience to God's will.

Occupational and business organizational patterns in modern rural America, however, seem to stand in sharp contrast to this Christian vision of work as vocation. In order to maximize profits ever larger units of production and increased mechanization seem to be required. Decisions about the work that should be done and the consequent availability of jobs are made by large corporations and agencies of government, all too often with little evident concern for the impact on the rural community. There is a growing sense of alienation from one's work that comes when a person feels helpless to make any truly significant decisions about the uses of work.

To recover a sense of Christian calling or vocation in the present patterns of rural employment and business does not mean, however, such a reduction in the scale of rural business and employment that everyone becomes self-employed. Those responsible must be accountable to the criteria of human justice and the enhancement of the human community, not just the criteria of minimal labor costs and maximal profits.

The rural churches, as centers of awareness of the human cost in the loss of vocation, have special obligations and opportunities to bear the work of judgement and promise in rural America. It is here people struggle to find and express their Christian vocation against the forces which take away jobs or exploit their labors for shortrange gains and profits.

### *C. Agriculture: From Food for the Hungry to the Politics of Monopolization to the Sharing of Substance*

Biblical teachings on food seem remarkably clear: the hungry are to be fed! Where people hunger and have no food, others must provide. The laws and customs recorded in the Old Testament affirm the fact that no one is to go hungry (Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 107:1-9). When some people are starving and others are rich, the prophets announce God's judgement on such sin (Amos 4). Jesus calls on his followers to feed the hungry (Matthew 25:35ff); moreover, he uses the feeding of the multitude (John 6:1-13) to signify the sacramental character of the shared meal. One symbol of the fulfillment of God's New Age is the messianic banquet where people sit at the table in the Kingdom (Luke 13:29-30).

Throughout Christian history the provision of food for the hungry has been an important discipline of service and sign of the New Age. It is no accident that modern Christian missionary movements have increasingly included modern agricultural technology in their programs with poor nations. Yet, while the church has consistently tried to feed the hungry, famine and starvation have remained widespread, affected by such factors as changes in climate, war and the dislocation of peoples, birth and death rates, disease and the lack of suitable growing conditions or methods. In current times inequities of food consumption and distribution continue to frustrate the objectives of feeding all people. Overconsumption and incredibly efficient food production in rich

nations become entangled with the politics of monopolization in which increased benefits for corporate and national interests take precedence over feeding the hungry. Morally sensitive food producers are distressed at the thought of curtailing their own production for "economic" reasons while others go hungry.

Though there are still hungry people in the rural as well as urban communities for whom the congregations should continue to provide, to recover the possibility of feeding the hungry in the modern era does not simply call for a return to the practice of individual charity. Rather, the hungry can be fed only if the systemic issues of distribution and consumption can be addressed.

While the rural churches—and the denominational and inter-denominational structures to which they belong—may not have easy answers for complex economic problems, the local churches are in a key position to sensitize the conscience of the rural and urban community to the call of God that all the hungry are to be fed and to call for renewed efforts to change economic and political arrangements so that the hungry will be fed.

*D. Community Development and Human Resources:  
From Communal Responsibility to Self-Centered Individuals to New Community of Hope*

The biblical witness provides rich examples of the ways in which God not only calls a people but also sets forth leaders and systems for ordering communal life justly and responsibly. The call of Moses (Exodus 3) and David (1 Samuel 16) and the call of the prophets (Isaiah 6) are examples. The call of the Servant in Isaiah 42 and the commission of Jesus (Luke 4:16ff) are focal images of the community and leadership which God intends. The giving of the Law, the many reenactments of God's covenant with the people and the new—and yet old—commandments taught by Jesus are all expressions of the ways in which God provides for responsible community.

In Christian history the Reformed tradition of the "godly commonwealth" continues as an expression of a responsible Christian community seeking to enable the entire society to represent responsible community.

Caring for the human community by providing services and nurturing leadership has become especially difficult for the rural community in modern America. The rural community is not immune to the disenchantment with public life and the pursuit of enjoyments which characterize American society generally. With declining rural populations have come increasingly centralized institutions: schools, businesses, governmental agencies, health care services, recreational opportunities and churches. Rural people must travel further to participate in community life, often in institutions which are no longer uniquely and locally their own. Declining rural populations and legislative redistricting have also meant a loss of power to affect the distribution of governmental programs and services. Though a substantial number of people are choosing to live, work or retire in rural communities, their desire to escape the pressures of urban living may not make them good prospects to fill the depleted leadership ranks in rural institutions.

To recover community responsibility and leadership in rural America does not mean turning society back to a

simpler, less complex, more agrarian social system. It does mean the recovery of hope for the value of local political and institutional life, the commitment of time and energy to such endeavors, and the creation of new institutional forms of community responsibility and leadership in the midst of privatization, disenchantment, and a declining population base.

The local church in rural America has a unique role to play in the recovery of such a vision of communal responsibility and leadership. It is often more truly local than other institutions. While related to historic faith traditions and denominational structures, it belongs to the people in a unique way. The local church is in an especially favorable position to create new models for humanizing the rural community.

IV. ACTION BY THE GENERAL SYNOD

A. Use and Care of the Land—Stewardship of Resources

*Issue Definition*

While much of rural America has been characterized by abundant natural resources—land, water, minerals, timber—abuse of these resources and inadequate land use planning can threaten this abundance and cause serious consequences to the environment. For example, in a hungry world, more than 1,500,000 acres per year of U.S. farmland are diverted from agricultural production to suburban development, highways, airports, reservoirs, mining and other non-farm uses. Sometimes excessive pressure for agricultural production results in poor soil conservation practices. Demand for mineral and timber production may conflict with agricultural production and the ecology of the system. The misuse of the right of eminent domain in the construction of highways, pipelines, and power lines affects people's rights and works against the common good.

Excessive mining of underground water supplies, rapidly expanding irrigation systems often accompanied by wastage of water, and multiplying and competing demands for water threaten to destroy the eco-system's capacity to provide adequate supplies of safe and unpolluted water for wildlife, agricultural, mining, timbering, or domestic uses.

The absence of an effective national energy policy coupled with a burgeoning national demand for energy has produced several adverse effects. The control of energy resources and related land areas is being consolidated in the hands of a few powerful energy and mineral extraction conglomerates. Human rights and the public interest are being largely ignored in the location of energy production facilities, transmission lines and waste disposal sites. Funding for research and development on alternative sources is totally inadequate.

On all matters of land, water and energy policy, demand for resources has threatened minority land and water rights, particularly Native American treaty rights.

*Policy Statement*

Affirming God's gift of creation and the mandate for responsible stewardship of this creation, the Twelfth General Synod of the UCC supports a policy of stewardship of natural resources and recommends the following positions for study and action to local churches, associations, conferences and national agencies of the Church:

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1. Government, private concerns and church groups should make a commitment to land use planning processes which will:
  - a. minimize diversion of agricultural land to non-food producing uses;
  - b. encourage sound soil conservation practices;
  - c. result in careful examination of the use of eminent domain by government or quasi-governmental authorities;
  - d. assure broader citizen participation in decisions on the exercise of eminent domain.
2. The policy of the federal government should be to respect the land and water rights of all peoples, especially minorities and those guaranteed in Native American treaties. All private interests should be encouraged to do the same.
3. Public policy should be developed at local, state and national levels assuring:
  - a. equitable availability of unpolluted water for domestic or other use by farmers and rural communities;
  - b. responsible use of underground water supplies to prevent undue depletion of water tables and to assure distribution which is both equitable and in the public interest between various competing uses.
4. As set forth in the Reclamation Act of 1902, public support should be given to the concept of acreage limitation for land irrigated by water from publicly financed irrigation projects to assure equitable distribution of water. It is recognized that the 160 acre limitation now embodied in the Act may be modified to meet contemporary family farm requirements, types of production, and climatic conditions.
5. A national energy policy involving local or regional citizen participation should be developed with at least the following components:
  - a. protective measures for the land and people of the nation's coal fields;
  - b. limitation on the control of land, fossil fuels, minerals and water by energy corporations and mineral extraction industries;
  - c. a ban on the disposing of hazardous wastes at any dumping or storage site not certified and regulated by the federal government;
  - d. a requirement for broad local citizen involvement in decisions regarding locating energy producing facilities and transmission lines;
  - e. provisions to foster conservation and stewardship as well as development of decentralized energy technologies including alternative energy sources such as sun, wind and tide.

### B. Values and Vocations: Business and Employment

#### *Issue Definition*

Rural America increasingly includes small business and industry, branch plants of large manufacturing firms, resort establishments and service occupations. Residents of rural America are becoming increasingly aware of numerous

social, economic and political problems associated with these phenomena including: discriminatory differentials in wages, benefits, job safety and job protection for rural workers as compared to their urban counterparts; negative attitudes regarding unions and collective bargaining; the exploitation of low paid unorganized rural labor for the sake of increased business profit.

For rural business the following factors pose problems and/or challenges: population mobility, declining rural populations in some areas, the impact of national franchising, chain stores and shopping malls on established independent stores. Many rural communities also suffer from dependency upon a single industry and the corresponding lack of economic diversification. This lack of diversification can produce pressures to relax air and water pollution standards for reasons of supposed economic health.

#### *Policy Statement*

Affirming the importance of justice in economic development and the concept of Christian vocation, General Synod Twelve of the UCC supports the following policy positions as essential to undergirding human dignity, economic justice and worker rights, and recommends them for study and action to local churches, associations, conferences and national agencies.

1. Residents of rural communities should be encouraged to promote and, in some cases, expand their business economy.
2. The right of rural workers to organize and to engage in collective bargaining should be protected. Employees and employers should implement means for establishing just remuneration and working conditions while government should provide impartial mechanisms to assist in orderly conduct of this collective bargaining and the organizing and recognizing of bargaining units.
3. All forms of discrimination against rural workers must be eliminated and wage and salary differentials must be abolished, except to the extent that such differentials reflect the actual differences in the cost of living in urban and rural areas.

### C. Sharing of Substance—Agriculture: The Family Farm

#### *Issue Definition*

Traditionally farming has been the predominant occupation, the major source of livelihood, and the focusing center of rural America. Though farm population has declined radically over several decades, farming remains dominant in American rural life and provides a high percentage of food and fiber products for the needs of the world.

The predominant farm unit of the past and present is the family farm on which the management, economic risk and most of the labor—peak seasons excepted—is provided by a given family. However, commercial family farm units are constantly confronted with issues of commodity price fluctuations, inflation, farm enlargement, corporate invasion, vertical integration (farm/processor direct contracting), increasing middlepersons margins, tax inequities, governmental program inadequacies, absentee ownership and foreign investment. In the face of these tremendous odds, family farms, especially those of small and medium size, are struggling for economic survival. The number of family farms has

decreased by 65 percent since 1935 but still constitutes over 95 percent of the remaining farm units in the USA. It is also widely recognized that well organized and managed family farms are at least as efficient economically as large-scale corporate farms and that they retain economic and social values widely affirmed by American society.

The plight of wage workers in agriculture has been well documented over the years. Some gains have been made in the ability of these workers to organize collective bargaining units, but in general, these workers continue to be exploited and deprived of decent housing, social service, health care and education.

For a number of decades the productive efficiency of American agriculture has provided the American consumer with an abundant and relatively inexpensive supply of food. This has helped to bring about an economic squeeze on the farm economy and the disappearance of over half of the nation's family farm units in a single generation.

For the sake of preserving broad dispersal of property ownership in the farm sector, stabilizing and protecting the economic and social quality of rural life, protecting the soil and water resources of the nation, and assuring continuation of abundant food at reasonable cost, commercial family farms should be protected and preserved as the dominant pattern in the USA. The alternative may well be growth of food production monopoly and enormous inflationary pressure on consumer prices.

The family farm is a crucial ingredient in the rich quality of rural life. Public and private policies should support the family farm. Both voluntary organizations of farmers for self-help and mutual economic protection, and governmental policy, should be designed and implemented to support the small and medium-sized family farm.

#### *Policy Statement*

The Twelfth General Synod of the UCC, therefore, affirms these positions of support for the family farm and recommends these positions for study and action to the churches, associations, conferences, and national agencies of the Church.

1. As provided in the action of the Tenth General Synod, a comprehensive US food policy should be developed with the basic goals of full utilization of America's enormous agricultural capability within the constraints of sound resource conservation, provision of food and fiber for domestic and international needs and the elimination of hunger and malnutrition in the US. Further, international food aid should be directed primarily toward meeting emergency situations and should be linked to agricultural development and food self-reliance in receipt countries.
2. The Congress of the US should affirm the preservation and the strengthening of the family farm as a basic goal of national policy which seeks:
  - a. to provide a fair and equitable return on the investment of capital, skill and labor of family farmers comparable to those in other economic pursuits. When there is an over supply of farm products which results in inequitable levels of in-

come, farm income should be protected through government initiated programs such as supply management, price and income programs, marketing orders and the like.

- b. to tailor government supply management programs and marketing orders to deliver protection and benefits principally to family farms with benefits diminishing as the scale of farm size increases, and with benefits unavailable to non-family farm corporations engaged in agricultural production.
  - c. to encourage development and maintenance of private and government held emergency farm commodity reserves in conjunction with an international food reserve program for use in famine and food crisis.
  - d. to continue and intensify the emphasis in the US Department of Agriculture and land grant universities on (1) research which will aid small and medium sized family farmers to improve productivity and economic return consistent with good conservation practices, (2) research into less energy consuming methods of agricultural production and processing, and (3) greater access to those services by small and medium sized family farmers.
3. Federal, state, and local governments should review their tax policies to remove any and all features which unfairly discriminate against, or lay special burdens upon, family farmers and/or surviving spouses.
  4. State government should be encouraged to consider legislation prohibiting or limiting the ownership and operating of farms by large non-family corporation.
  5. The practice of mutual association for self help should be supported among family farmers by encouraging them to:
    - a. join cooperatives and to participate actively in their policy direction in order to capture and retain for themselves earnings from purchasing supplies and marketing commodities.
    - b. enter into market bargaining associations to increase their bargaining power in the marketplace.
    - c. create and extend direct farmer-to-consumer marketing organizations, especially in low income neighborhoods, which can increase farmer income, decrease consumer food costs, improve freshness and quality of farm produce available to consumers, and reduce the cost and energy waste involved in packaging and long-distance hauling of fresh farm produce.

#### **D. Sharing Community: Community Development and Human Resources**

##### *Issue Definition*

The Christian faith calls for the building and sharing of community. However, numerous socio-economic factors are currently undermining the qualitative aspects of rural community life. These factors include emphasis on larger

societal and economic units, e.g., consolidated schools, town-centered churches, ever-growing farm units, intrusion of urban centered bureaucracies, both governmental and private, into rural communities, and preoccupation with urban oriented mass communications—TV, radio, press.

Among the problems facing many rural communities are:

- a. limited availability of doctors, nurses, hospitals, and health care facilities;
- b. limited or inadequate schools and educational facilities;
- c. limited or inadequate funding for welfare needs and lack of availability of welfare services;
- d. discriminatory practices against racial and ethnic minorities and women;
- e. antagonism and conflict between long time rural residents and newcomers to rural areas.

Of special concern in several regions of the US are the large numbers of limited resource farmers—farm units with sales of less than \$2500 per year—which constitute 35.3 percent of the total farm units in the nation. These farm families suffer from serious neglect. Despite a mandate to concern itself with the needs and problems of these farmers through the Farmers Home Administration and the Rural Development Program, the US Department of Agriculture has shown a preoccupation with commercial farming. Not only has this discriminated against low-income farmers, but also it has added to discrimination against racial and ethnic minority groups who are found predominantly in the low income sector.

#### *Policy Statement*

Accordingly, the Twelfth General Synod supports efforts at all levels of the government and the private sector for community development, improvement of services, cultivation of human resources and leadership development in communities of all sizes. General Synod recommends these policy positions to local churches, associations, conferences and national agencies of the Church.

1. All forms of discrimination, public and private, should be terminated by:
  - a. eliminating institutionalized discrimination against rural communities;
  - b. giving greater attention to the demands of justice in government policy, community programs, private business, associations, and organizations to eliminate all forms of social and economic discrimination against the poor, minority persons and women;
  - c. giving continuing support to Native American Treaty Rights; e.g., land, water, mineral, hunting, fishing rights.
2. Rural residents should be encouraged and enabled to participate in and provide leadership for rural community organizations. Such efforts should be designated to overcome problems of distance and sparsity of population and to achieve more effective and equitable social, economic, and community services; e.g., housing, education, health, crime prevention, and services for the aging.
3. Government designed programs of rural develop-

ment to assist limited resource farmers should be established. These may be programs such as low cost supervised credit for farm enlargement and reorganization for those who choose to remain in farming and expansion of rural industries for the sake of those who seek to supplement or replace farm income with off-farm employment.

4. The effective empowerment of local small town and rural congregations should receive continuing major attention by:
  - a. urging national agencies, conferences, associations, local churches and related seminaries and colleges to prepare community leadership from within rural congregations;
  - b. requesting agencies of the United Church of Christ to provide appropriate training and support for rural pastors and small churches.
  - c. calling the churches of the United Church of Christ to work toward increasing member participation in structures and processes for planning the future of rural communities.

#### **10. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PRONOUNCEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

The Moderator recognized Mrs. Euphemia Young (SE). Chairperson of the Committee on Human Rights for the report. Mrs. Young referred to the editorial changes and moved the adoption of the Pronouncement as revised. Mrs. Young spoke to the report and called on the Rev. James Atchison (FL), a member of the Committee, who also spoke to the report. There was discussion, and it was:

79-GS-31 VOTED: The Twelfth General Synod adopts the Pronouncement on Human Rights as revised:

#### THE PRONOUNCEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Eleventh General Synod in its Resolution on Human Rights directed the Office for Church In Society "to draft a major pronouncement on Human Rights for the Twelfth General Synod." The Office for Church In Society appointed a national advisory committee, including representatives from other national agencies, minority caucuses in the United Church of Christ, seminaries and ecumenical agencies, to aid it in carrying out this directive.

##### I. The Core Problem

###### *Human Rights from the Christian Perspective*

Human Rights are the gift and demand of God. They have their source in what God has done and is doing in creation, in Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit. In every age God calls upon people to proclaim the righteousness and justice in the world. God creates, reconciles and redeems everything that is. Thus human rights are universal demands. No person, no group, no society is excused from recognizing the claim that other human beings must be treated justly and that societies must be ordered on the basis of freedom and equity.

When the Church of Jesus Christ has faltered in proclaiming and enacting God's righteousness, other advocates of human rights have stood up throughout the world. They have pointed to a universal moral law to be implemented in all civil orders. Different societies have understood human