

Ministry of the Church, as revised and spoke to the report indicating changes from the original document. Delegates and others granted voice spoke in support of the Pronouncement, and it was

81-GS-35 VOTED: The Thirteenth General Synod adopts the revised Pronouncement on Christian Education: The Teaching Ministry of the Church.

### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: THE TEACHING MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

#### Summary

Christian Education is a primary ministry of the Church.

#### *Biblical and Historical Perspective*

The Lord Jesus charged the Church in the great commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age." (Matthew 28: 19-20). From thence and from their years with the Rabbi (Teacher), the Disciples and Apostles understood that the teaching ministry was to be an integral part of the Church's life. This emphasis continued as the Apostle Paul shared with young Timothy a long list of Christian attitudes and behaviors, and then said "Teach and urge these duties." (I Timothy 6:2). Finally the teaching ministry was seen to have the seal of the Holy Spirit as it was acknowledged in Ephesians 4:11-12: "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

Roger Shinn has set forth an approach of Christian Education in simple terms when he writes: "To introduce persons into the life and mission of the community of Christian faith." Then he reminds us: "Christian Education is not simply a business of pumping information into people's heads. . . Rather, it is inviting them to share the common life of Christians. In personal relationships with other people they can enter into the worship, the moral discipline, and the study that characterize Christian faith. They can join in the exploration of problems that people face when they seek to be loyal to Christ in a perplexing world."<sup>1</sup>

This it is affirmed that the teaching ministry of the church is as necessary, vital, and important as all other ministries.

Recent development in Church and society have again focused our attention upon the importance of the teaching ministry and have called for a deeper commitment to it:

One, the revisitation of the Sunday School through the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of its founding by Robert Raikes not only reveals the flaws and failures of the past, but also the successes and developments. Such a review gives us a new appreciation for the teaching ministry of the Church.

Two, the introduction of new curricula<sup>2</sup> has made us aware of new opportunities and different methods.

Three, the emerging attention to outdoor ministries as an extension of local church educational ministries has made us aware of additional opportunities for teaching and learning.

Four, there is a resurgence of interest in liturgical renewal. An awareness of the richness of the educational content in liturgy: the reading of the lectionary, Sunday worship, the sacraments, funeral-memorial services, wedding celebrations, etc., invites and calls forth a new thrust in the educational task of the Church.

Five, changing patterns and attitudes in family life challenge the Church and bring its teaching ministry to address these from a serious and sensitive faith stance.

Six, the mobility of our society with the accompanying problems of population growth/decline and identity of personhood have sent us searching after our roots. We struggle to learn who we are genealogically and spiritually. It is in the faith community and its teaching ministry that we finally come to know who we are and whose we are.

The teaching ministry of the Church is on-going. It may be challenged at times. It may be altered at points. But, like a silver thread, it continues as the Church shares its heritage and faith, calling for a life commitment to Jesus Christ.

#### *Affirmation*

The United Church of Christ affirms that *Christian Education: The Teaching Ministry of the Church* is a central part of its life. It affirms that from time to time there is the need to lift up aspects of this ministry in order that the Church may sharpen its focus and commitment, and more adequately prepare itself for the best possible ministry.

#### *The Church's Particular Educational Needs*

With this understanding of Christian Education in mind, eight needs stand out for our attention:

1. Renewed dedication to teach and learn the unique thought, words and deeds of the Christian life.
2. Commitment to firm and clear faith in Jesus Christ for children, youth, and adults.
3. Clarification of the call in ordination to teach, and of the way this calling relates to the training and standing of pastors, and to the training, placement, and status of professional and voluntary Christian educators and commissioned workers.
4. Attention to the special educational opportunities of our outdoor ministry conference centers where more intensive and ecologically sensitive Christian Education can occur.
5. New initiatives in educating individuals to be transformed through probing the spiritual dimensions of their lives.

1. Roger Shinn. *THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF OUR CHURCH*. United Church Press, Boston, 1962. p. 20.

2. Resources such as *Christian Education/Shared Approaches*, *Hispanic, Confirmation*, *UCC Identity*.

6. Greater attention to special educational needs of Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, elderly, and disabled persons.
7. Careful attention to education for effective social action in response to global realities and social mobility.
8. Special effort to recognize the inter-relationship between the teaching and preaching ministries.

The Thirteenth General Synod declares that Christ calls us to teach the gospel to the ends of the earth, and we recognize the power of the Holy Spirit to work in and through our lives in the teaching ministry of the Church, and the Church has sought to teach Christians to think, speak, and act by its unique precepts and ethical principles, and a new vision and varied methods are called for to transform individuals and society to revitalize this essential function of the Church, and

THEREFORE, the concerns, issues and needs herein contained be directed to the appropriate instrumentalities and other national bodies, conferences, associations and local churches of the United Church of Christ for study and action.

**9. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION RELATED TO THE PRONOUNCEMENT ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: THE TEACHING MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

Ms. Anderson continued with the report and moved the adoption of the Proposal for Action. It was

81-GS-36 VOTED: The Thirteenth General Synod adopts the Proposal for Action related to the Pronouncement on Christian Education: The Teaching Ministry of the Church.

**PROPOSAL FOR ACTION**

WHEREAS, the Thirteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ has adopted the Pronouncement, "*Christian Education: The Teaching Ministry of the Church*," and

WHEREAS, this Pronouncement has raised a number of important concerns, issues and needs to be addressed by the Church,

THEREFORE, the Thirteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ

1. recommends Christian Education and the issues and needs highlighted in the Pronouncement, "*Christian Education: The Teaching Ministry of the Church*" be considered in the priority process of the Fourteenth General Synod.
2. calls on local churches, conferences, and the national instrumentalities to make the study of the Bible, church history, Christian thought and ethics, and the global reality an all-church endeavor involving the entire membership — adults as well as children and youth.
3. calls on local churches, conferences, the instrumentalities, and other national bodies to allocate greater financial support for Christian Education.
4. calls on the Board for Homeland Ministries, the

Office for Church Life and Leadership, Church-related colleges, and closely related seminaries to study, clarify and report to the next General Synod on the training, authorizing and certifying of pastors and teachers, Christian educators, and leaders of UCC outdoor ministry conference centers.

5. calls on local churches and conferences to increase efforts to recruit and support persons to participate in outdoor ministry events, as excellent opportunities for intensive and ecological education.
6. calls on conferences to creatively address the issues of the real costs of maintenance, expansion, and quality leadership for outdoor ministry sites and programs.
7. calls on the Board for Homeland Ministries to provide leadership and materials for new initiatives in fostering faith development, providing educational resources for Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, elderly, and disabled persons, and providing more bilingual resources.
8. calls the Church to renewed effort to develop youth ministry at the local, conference and national levels, supporting the enthusiasm engendered at the 1980 National Youth Event.
9. calls upon the Board for Homeland Ministries of the United Church of Christ to strengthen the volunteer in-service year program administered by the UCBHM in cooperation with the Conferences and local churches.
10. calls upon the Office for Church Life and Leadership and the Board for Homeland Ministries to provide leadership training programs and resources which better understand and utilize the educational opportunities in the liturgical forms and seasons of the Church.
11. calls on the closely related seminaries to the UCC and Conferences to provide continuing educational opportunities for volunteer and professional leaders.
12. calls on the Office for Church Life and Leadership to include in the professional profile forms questions and ratings that provide opportunities for pastors and educators to indicate their experience, training and skill in Christian education.
13. calls upon the local churches to give equal consideration to the compensation of teaching and preaching ministers in order to recognize the comparable value of both functions while taking into consideration education, experience, and other factors.

**10. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSAL FOR ACTION ON THE CHURCH AND PERSONS WITH HANDICAPS**

The Moderator recognized Mr. Royal Goheen (ME), chairperson of the Committee on The Church and Persons with Handicaps for the report. Mr. Goheen explained that because the Eleventh General Synod had adopted a Pronouncement on the Handicapped and the Twelfth General Synod had adopted a resolution on