

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has been called on in the past to assess the extent to which its structures and instrumentalities reflect the prevailing values (e.g., racism and sexism); and

WHEREAS, homophobia (defined as the irrational fear of same-gender feelings, identification, and/or social-sexual expression which can be either conscious or subconscious) prevails in our culture and society; and

WHEREAS, lesbians, gay men, and bi-sexual persons suffer from institutionalized homophobia through isolation, devaluation, and discrimination to such an extent that they lead lives that are either hidden or ridiculed within the institutional church; and

WHEREAS, such treatment fosters emotional strain, alienation, a lack of self-worth, and in some cases a life where suicide appears to be the only option; and

WHEREAS, these same persons have gifts of ministry and faith to offer the United Church of Christ; and

WHEREAS, some Conferences, local churches, Associations and national Instrumentalities have taken steps in addressing institutionalized homophobia; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has at times demonstrated to lesbians, gay men, bi-sexual persons—lay and clergy—that they are not persons of equal worth in the life of the church by turning these persons away from access to jobs, decision-making processes, and other aspects of institutional life which are available with little constraint to those who are heterosexual;

THEREFORE, the Fourteenth General Synod denounces institutionalized expressions of homophobia in all its forms, and calls upon all levels of the United Church of Christ to expose, to address, and in the light of the Gospel, to transform institutionalized homophobia.

10. RESOLUTION ON HOMOPHOBIA AS IT AFFECTS PEACEMAKING

Mr. Dietz continued the Report of the Committee on the report of the Task Force for the Study of Human Sexuality and referred the delegates to the recommendation concerning Homophobia As It Affects Peace Making. He indicated that it was the judgment of the Committee that this matter properly belonged to the Committee on Peace but because there was not time to return it to the General Synod for referring, this committee considered the resolution and prepared a recommendation. Mr. Dietz moved its adoption. There was discussion, and upon being put to a vote, the motion was lost. The Moderator indicated that time had expired and continuation of the Committee report would occur later in the agenda.

11. WORSHIP REFLECTION

The Moderator called on the Rev. Sarah Bentley who led the General Synod in worship reflection.

12. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSED PRONOUNCEMENT ON TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

Assistant Moderator Schroer assumed the chair and called on the Rev. George Matthews (CAC), Chairperson for the report of the Committee on Toxic and Hazardous Waste. Mr. Matthews moved the adoption of the Pronouncement on Toxic and Hazardous Waste as revised and indicated the

changes in the document. It was

83 GS 37 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts as revised the Pronouncement on Toxic and Hazardous Waste.

TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

I. Summary

A growing concern has focused the attention of many of our United Church of Christ members and congregations on the issue of toxic and hazardous waste and its destructive effect on the well-being of individuals and their communities. This pronouncement is a call to the Church to expand its education and active involvement in the ecological needs of God's earth and the empowerment needs of our sisters and brothers who live in potentially life-threatening situations.

II. Background:

The North Carolina/Virginia field office of the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ has been involved in an effort to assist the local predominantly Black and poor community of Afton, North Carolina, which was subjected to the construction of a polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) landfill in its midst.

A four-year study conducted by the Warren County Citizens concerned about PCB's led the citizens of Warren County, North Carolina, to the conclusion that the trucking of PCB-contaminated soil to a state-constructed landfill in the Afton community was an arbitrary and unjustified act. The burial of toxic waste at the site posed a real threat to human existence. It appeared that the site had been chosen on the basis of racial, economic and political criteria instead of on sound and responsible scientific and ecological criteria.

The citizens of Warren County, North Carolina, perceived the danger and pursued every available legal course to seek redress of their situation. After every possible due process of law had been exhausted, the citizens resorted to nonviolent civil disobedience.

The community sees the dump as a symbol of discrimination and as an example of the kind of injustice that civil rights legislation, the U.S. Constitution, and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights are supposed to prevent.

It is necessary to store toxic and hazardous waste generated during industrial production and other waste already dangerously uncontained, where other feasible means of disposal do not exist. On the other hand, these facilities can adversely impact the affected communities if incorrectly designed, sited or operated; and may cause undue sacrifice. Even if correctly designed, sited and operated, an injustice may be perceived. Therefore, every siting has the potential for discrimination against the affected community.

III. Biblical, Theological and Ethical Rationale

God gave humankind dominion over all living things and responsibility for the stewardship of the earth. We read in Genesis:

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth

after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth . . ." (Genesis 1:25-31, KJV).

As Christians, it is clear that we have a responsibility for the well-being of the earth and its resources and for the betterment of humankind. With this privileged responsibility, we cannot tolerate toxic aggression against our earth or any person. "As you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

IV. The Statement of Christian Conviction

The Fourteenth General Synod affirms the following:

1. God gave humankind dominion over all living things and responsibility for the earth and the stewardship of it.
2. As Christians, it is clear that we have a responsibility for the earth and its resources, for the betterment of humankind, for the proper use and conservation of its resources and for the maintenance of a viable ecology in the face of inevitable change. It is up to us, as Christians, to use and to maintain these resources as good stewards.
3. Under the perceived or real threats of toxic and hazardous waste facilities, the church must support citizens who are entering into bonds of mutual protection, forming alliances at the local, state, and national levels, and looking to people committed to the environment and to civil and human rights for direction and leadership.
4. We are not free to mistreat the earth and its resources because they do not belong to us; they belong to God. Thus, Christians must address these issues in the churches, in the media of communications, and in the halls of government.

13. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION RELATED TO THE PRONOUNCEMENT ON TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr. Matthews continued with the report and moved the adoption of the Proposal for Action related to the Pronouncement on Toxic and Hazardous Waste. He moved the adoption of the Proposal for Action.

The Moderator recognized Robert Lane (CT) who moved to amend the motion by changing the word "offices" to "bodies" in the last line of the first indented paragraph, by adding the words "and instrumentalities" after the word "association" in the first line of the fifth indented paragraph, by adding the words "and environmental issues" to the end of the sixth indented paragraph, by adding at the end of the last indented paragraph the words "and air, land, and water pollutants;" and by adding a new paragraph at the end of the indented paragraphs to read "Urges the Office for Social Responsibility in Investments of the United Church Boards to encourage policies and develop guidelines for church agencies and churches that will consider the by-products of the corporations in which they invest, and will help them monitor their existing investment as to corporate responsibility." There was discussion, and upon being put to a vote, the motion to amend was adopted.

The Moderator recognized Daniel Caplan (CAC) who moved to amend the motion by deleting the words "Black, other minority and" from the second indented paragraph

and by deleting the words "the EPA in particular" from the last indented paragraph. There was discussion, and upon being put to a vote, the motion to amend was lost.

The Moderator recognized Lorin Cope (OH) who moved to amend the motion by deleting all of the eighth indented paragraph and by substituting the words "Calls upon all levels of government and industry to work together in developing sane and effective means of eliminating hazardous waste by chemical neutralization and/or incineration. There was discussion, and upon being put to a vote, the motion to amend was lost.

A motion to terminate debate was adopted, and it was 83 GS 38 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts as amended the Proposal for Action related to the Pronouncement on Toxic and Hazardous Waste.

PROPOSAL FOR ACTION RELATED TO THE PRONOUNCEMENT ON TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

Whereas the Fourteenth General Synod has adopted the pronouncement on Toxic and Hazardous Waste, and whereas this pronouncement calls the church to expand its education and active involvement in the ecological needs of God's earth and the empowerment needs of our sisters and brothers who live in potentially life-threatening situations; therefore, the Fourteenth General Synod:

- Calls upon the United Church of Christ to affirm the commitment of stewardship of our natural resources and the disposal of toxic and hazardous waste. Action policies should be formed at every level of its work; national bodies, Conferences, Associations, and local churches;
- Calls upon the whole Church to call upon other denominations to work with us to assist in organizing Black, other minority and politically disempowered communities to prevent them from becoming dump sites for toxic and hazardous waste;
- Urges advocacy at all levels of the Church to be coordinated by the Office for Church in Society;
- Urges the Office for Church in Society to utilize the initial programs of the Commission for Racial Justice Environmental Justice Program;
- Urges local churches, Conferences, and Associations and Instrumentalities to participate in the development of local sermons, Christian education and programs around the education of people about toxic and hazardous waste;
- Calls upon the whole Church to call upon other denominations to work with us in eliminating the problems of toxic and hazardous waste and environmental issues;
- Mandates the President of the United Church of Christ to communicate the concerns of this pronouncement to the President of the United States.
- Calls upon the President and the Congress of the United States to propose and to develop feasible programs to deal with the problems of toxic and hazardous waste; namely that all toxic chemical compounds must be chemically modified so that they are no more toxic than the substances naturally occurring from