

**17. INTRODUCTION OF REV. JOHN M. SCHAEFFER, CONFERENCE MINISTER OF THE MONTANA-NORTHERN WYOMING CONFERENCE**

The Moderator recognized the Rev. John Bross, Interim Conference Minister of the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference, on a point of personal privilege who introduced to the General Synod, the Rev. John M. Schaeffer, Iowa Falls, IA, the newly elected Conference Minister of the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference.

**18. REQUEST TO MAKE THE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES PRIORITY UNANIMOUS**

The Moderator recognized Richard Baylor (FL) on a point of personal privilege, who inquired whether it would be in order to make the vote on the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Priority unanimous. The Moderator referred the matter to the Business Committee.

**19. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSED PRONOUNCEMENT ON CLERGY IN CRISIS**

The Moderator called on the Rev. Roy Nyren (MA) for the report of the Proposed Pronouncement on Clergy in Crisis. Mr. Nyren moved the adoption of the resolution on the Proposed Pronouncement on Clergy in Crisis and explained that the document had been rewritten as a resolution and called on the Rev. Fred Register (CAL.S) a member of the Committee to speak in support and need of the resolution.

The Moderator recognized James Boler (MO) who moved a friendly amendment that the phrase "and church educators" be added after the word "clergy" wherever it appears in the resolved section of the resolution.

A motion to terminate debate was adopted, and it was

83 GS 40 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts as amended the Resolution on the Proposed Pronouncement on Clergy in Crisis.

**RESOLUTION ON CLERGY IN CRISIS**

The Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ gives thanks to the Commission for Racial Justice for his willingness to speak out on the critical issue of the crises among clergy when others have been reluctant to speak. The Commission has challenged the United Church of Christ to act on a matter that affects us all. The whole Church is grateful for this initiative.

We recognize and are grateful for the places in the Church where ministry to clergy, their spouses, and their families in crisis have been and are taking place. More is needed.

*Theological Statement*

The Church is a covenantal community of faith called into being by the Word of God in Jesus Christ. Our covenantal life includes our relationship with God, the Church, and neighbor.

Clergy are called and set apart through ordination for priestly, prophetic, and pastoral functions. Those roles of Christian servanthood include the cost of sacrifice and suffering, which may lead to crisis and other forms of personal tension and stress.

Clergy experience in their own lives, the brokenness and pain of the human condition, which often are contrary to the role expectations of the Church, culture, and self. This

alienation creates crises of various forms, guises and degrees.

The Church's call to be an instrument of confession and an agent of reconciliation is often forgotten or ignored when clergy are in crisis. The Church in faithful covenant is called to respond compassionately to clergy, their spouses, and their family members who find themselves in vocational, social, and personal crises.

*Context and Definitions*

Society is in the throes of major cultural change. Value systems are in flux. Our understanding of our roles and their corresponding duties has been changing rapidly.

Like other people, clergy become vulnerable. Throughout the United Church of Christ, increasing number of clergy are unable to function effectively and have difficulty seeking help with their own hurt, pain, and sin. At least four factors are apparent to us: 1) There is a lack of understanding and structure for confession and redemption for clergy; 2) There are constraints not appropriate to the role of the clergy; 3) There is a lack of awareness of available resources; 4) Many laypeople feel inadequate to offer help and support.

Crises surface at all levels of the Church. Conference ministers encounter increasing incidents of suicide, alcoholism, severe depression, adultery, divorce, and theft—crises which directly contradict role expectations for clergy. Others, who are modeling new forms of ministry, are experiencing extreme pressures. Women, minorities, and persons with disabilities face the added stress of discrimination. And, faithfulness to prophetic ministries generates crisis.

Many congregations are struggling with these realities—unsure of how to reach out; occasionally quick to judge and condemn. The Church must respond!

WHEREAS, as Christians we know the frailty and the sinfulness of all persons; and

WHEREAS, as Christians we know that persons are frequently broken by the world; and

WHEREAS, as Christians we know clergy, their spouses, and their families are broken by their frailty and their sin or by the demands of the world around them; and

WHEREAS, Christ calls us to extend a healing, forgiving, grace-filled ministry;

THEREFORE, the Fourteenth General Synod:

1. Calls upon the United Church of Christ to minister to clergy and church educators, their spouses, and their family members who are in crisis situations;

2. Calls upon the Office for Church Life and Leadership to convene a working group on "Clergy in Crisis," consisting of representatives of the Commission for Racial Justice, the Office for Church Life and Leadership, the Board for Homeland Ministries, the Board for World Ministries, the Pension Boards, the Coordinating Center for Women, the Council of Conference Ministers, closely related seminaries, and three persons from the Church at large to be appointed by the Executive Council, and these representatives to the working group shall be funded by the bodies which appoint them.

The tasks of the working group should include but not be limited to the following: a) to define and to research the

causes and forms of clergy and church educators crises in the United Church of Christ; b) to identify the existing resources for help within and beyond the United Church of Christ; c) to disseminate the findings to clergy and church educators, churches, Associations, Conferences, Instrumentalities and other national bodies, and closely related seminaries and health and welfare institutions; and to urge each to utilize the resources; d) to call upon each of the above to develop strategies to help clergy and church educators, their spouses, and their families through crisis situations; e) to make a full report to the Fifteenth General Synod.

3. Calls upon all parts of the Church to develop policies and strategies to help clergy and church educators, their spouses, and their family members through crisis situations, and to share their work with the larger Church through the Clergy in Crisis Working Group.

## 20. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSED PRONOUNCEMENT ON VIOLENCE IN RELATION TO WOMEN

The Moderator called on Mrs. Magdeline Vasquez (IL), Chairperson for the Report of the Committee on Violence in Relation to Women. Mrs. Vasquez moved the adoption of the Pronouncement on Violence in Relation to Women as revised and indicated changes in the document. It was

83 GS 41 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts as revised the Pronouncement on Violence in Relation to Women.

### THE PRONOUNCEMENT ON VIOLENCE IN RELATION TO WOMEN

#### I. Summary

As Christians, believing in the sacredness of God's creation and in the equality of women and men, we are called to speak out against the physical and/or sexual abuse of any person. Because women are the primary victims of domestic violence, rape, and sexual harassment, this Pronouncement calls for the United Church of Christ to increase its understanding of violence against women, provide ministry to victims and abusers, and work against violence in our society.

#### II. Origin

The Thirteenth General Synod called upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to draft a major pronouncement and proposals for action on Violence Against Women for the consideration of the Fourteenth General Synod, and to be in consultation with the Coordinating Center for Women, the Office for Church in Society, and the Commission for Racial Justice in preparation of the Pronouncement and proposals.

#### III. Background and Rationale

Violence is widespread in American homes and society. A high percentage of that violence is directed against women and children. Every five minutes a forcible rape occurs in this country.<sup>1</sup> Every 30 seconds a child is abused.<sup>2</sup> One-tenth of these cases are sexual abuse. In 85 percent of these latter cases, the abuser is a family member or acquaintance of the child.<sup>3</sup> Every 60 seconds, a case of physical spousal assault will be reported to the police.<sup>4</sup> If a woman, you have a one in six chance of being raped.<sup>5</sup> If a

married woman, you have a one in seven chance of being raped by your husband,<sup>6</sup> and the law of your state may offer you no protection at all. If a married woman or if a woman cohabiting with a male, you have a one in two chance of being physically battered.<sup>7</sup>

This abuse goes on each hour of the day, each day of the week, each week of the year. To compound the horror, recent research suggests that today's abused will be tomorrow's abuser.<sup>8</sup> Thus the problem becomes generational, reminding us of the Biblical phrase "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." This Pronouncement does not address violence generally in our society, does not focus on violence against women and men, and does not survey violence as the "human condition." This is by intention because women and girls of all ages are the primary victims of "domestic" or "family" violence, just as they are the primary victims of rape, sexual abuse, or sexual harassment.

"Domestic" or "family" violence includes spouse battering, child abuse or neglect, and elder abuse (which the media has christened "granny bopping" because elderly women are the most frequent victims), as well as marital rape and incest. It can even include violence carried to the extreme of murder. But whatever its kind, domestic violence injures women and children more frequently and more seriously than it does men.

Dr. Murray Straus, America's foremost authority on domestic violence, asserts that almost 30 percent of all married couples admit to violent behavior.<sup>9</sup> Assuming that many hesitate to admit their acts, he estimates that 50-60 percent of all married couples experience serious forms of violence at some time.<sup>10</sup> A similar or even higher level of violence may occur among cohabiting or courting couples.<sup>11</sup>

Violent behavior in the home includes: throwing things; pushing or shoving; slapping, kicking, or biting; hitting with a fist; beating; threatening with a knife or a gun; slashing or shooting. Only the last several actions are considered in Straus's statistics. It is a sad commentary on American families that many of these actions are often viewed as "normal" in families. Violent behavior also includes sexual assault, which may occur either within or outside the family unit.

Both men and women use violence, but the violent male usually does far more damage than does the violent woman.<sup>12</sup> Abusive men are particularly likely to attack a woman when she is pregnant, thereby intensifying the damage.<sup>13</sup> But individuals need not resort to constant violence: one episode can "establish the balance of power within the relationship for a lifetime."<sup>14</sup>

"Violence in the home inflicts suffering on children and the elderly as well. Over one million cases of child abuse are reported each year; many thousands undoubtedly go unreported.<sup>15</sup> Two thousand children die each year from physical abuse.<sup>16</sup> In the home, as in society at large, over 80 percent of all victims of sexual abuse are girls.<sup>17</sup> With more mothers cohabiting with men who are not the fathers of their children, sexual abuse of the woman's daughters by the live-in male is increasing. But incest is also widespread, the major incestuous abuser of girls being the child's father or stepfather.<sup>18</sup> Finally, one million persons 65 or older are abused physically or sexually each year. Women, who outlive men, are the primary victims.<sup>19</sup>