

Fifteenth General Synod to celebrate the gifts of our youth; and

5. places greater emphasis on accepting the talent and energy of the youth under 21 by encouraging greater participation at all levels of our church and in all capacities.

**15. RESOLUTION ON THE HOMELESS IN AMERICA**

Mr. Curry continued the report of Section II, moved the adoption of the Resolution on the Homeless in America and called on Mrs. Earlene Hentzel (IA), Chairperson of the small group that considered this resolution, to speak to the motion. There was no discussion, and it was

83 GS 49 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution on the Homeless in America.

**RESOLUTION ON THE HOMELESS IN AMERICA**

*Summary:*

The Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ is asked to urge member churches and individual members to become actively involved in ministries to homeless persons and to support efforts to lobby for Federal, state and local action in regards to homelessness.

The Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ is further asked to declare that the United Church of Christ, as a national body, has a collective concern for the plight of homeless persons and concern over the issues which cause them to be homeless.

*Background:*

It is impossible to know exactly how many persons are homeless in the United States. The homeless remain unnumbered until such time as they come in from the outside to receive some form of service. Only then are they counted or even countable. What is known is that, for example, in one metropolitan area, over 11,000 persons were served by shelter agencies in the past year.

Traditionally, the media, both print and visual, have handed us a picture of older, alcoholic males and disoriented "bag ladies" as being the homeless. A recent study, however, indicates that the 18 to 29 year old group accounts for a far greater percentage of the homeless than ever before believed.

Recent Federal legislation providing emergency funds for shelter and food was enacted only as a stop-gap measure and only after considerable pressure from many groups, particularly religious, all over the country. The funds provided, while a big help, are still woefully inadequate for the great need which exists.

Even if the economy were to take an immediate and dramatic upswing, joblessness, lack of low-cost housing, and homelessness would not disappear. The issue would still have to be spoken to and the homeless persons must be cared for.

*Biblical and Theological Rationale:*

Both the Jewish and Christian faiths place strong emphasis on hospitality and compassion. The directive of the Lord in Deuteronomy 10:19—"Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt," (KJV) is clear enough. The New Testament story of the Good Samaritan provides us an example. Jesus' words in Matthew

25: 31-46 again provide us with an example and a clear directive for action: "I was a stranger and ye took me in." (Matthew 25:35) (KJV) is the basic issue at hand. The call for Christian social action cannot be denied.

WHEREAS, the number of homeless persons in our communities, both urban and rural, is dramatically increasing, due, at least in part, to: (1) the shortage of low-rent housing; (2) the economic pressures of our time as inflation combines with decreasing assistance to the poor; (3) the high percentage of unemployment, especially among minority youth; (4) the lack of jobs, counseling, follow-up care, and community residence facilities for deinstitutionalized persons; and

WHEREAS, the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ calls us to be Christ's servants in the service of the whole human family; and

WHEREAS, the problem of homelessness and the factors causing homelessness directly relate to the family and to family life, a Priority decided upon in the Thirteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ;

THEREFORE, the Fourteenth General Synod encourages the United Church of Christ, all of its churches and their members to:

1. support local organizations addressing the problems of the homeless;
2. devote volunteer resources, skills, time, worship services, and chaplaincy services to nearby shelters;
3. offer space for and support the establishment of emergency shelters and day-time shelters;
4. encourage local businesses to provide jobs for homeless persons who are able to work;
5. volunteer resources, skills, time, and other material support to organizations such as soup kitchens, relief centers, etc., which minister to the needs of the homeless; and
6. urge national, state, and local lawmakers to enact legislation on this issue as a result of the Urban Oversight Hearings which have revealed homelessness as a national problem.

**16. RESOLUTION TO ENDORSE S.T.O.P. NUCLEAR WAR**

Mr. Curry continued the report of Section II, moved the adoption of the Resolution to Endorse S.T.O.P. Nuclear War and called on the Rev. Christopher Noffke (MI), Chairperson of the small group that considered this resolution, to speak to the motion. There was no discussion, and it was

83 GS 50 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution to Endorse S.T.O.P. Nuclear War.

**RESOLUTION TO ENDORSE S.T.O.P. NUCLEAR WAR**

WHEREAS, the youth who were present at that General Synod of the United Church of Christ urged support for peace as a Priority for a four-year span beginning in June, 1981; and

WHEREAS, the future of our church, the future of the world, and the future of all depend upon the commitment and involvement of young people in peace work; and

WHEREAS, the Student/Teacher Organization to Prevent Nuclear War (S.T.O.P. Nuclear War, Box 232, North-

field, Mass. 02360) was founded in Massachusetts by a United Church of Christ minister who is an active member of the Massachusetts Conference Peace Priority Task Team; and

WHEREAS, S.T.O.P. Nuclear War is a tax exempt, educational organization which has developed extracurricular programs specifically for use in secondary schools and houses of worship; and

WHEREAS, S.T.O.P. Nuclear War has developed goals which are to:

1. Educate students, teachers, and the wider community about the nuclear arms race,
2. Empower young people and adults by demonstrating that an educated organized group can make a meaningful contribution to the effort to prevent nuclear war,
3. Effect changes in national and international consciousness which will increase governments' receptivity to security strategies not based on nuclear weapons; and

WHEREAS, the 184th Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ and the National Education Association (NEA) endorse the S.T.O.P. Nuclear War program;

THEREFORE, the Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ endorses S.T.O.P. Nuclear War and urges local United Church of Christ churches to initiate S.T.O.P. Nuclear War chapters in their youth groups, and develop S.T.O.P. programs in their congregations and communities.

## 17. RECOGNITION OF CHURCH GROWTH

The Moderator called on the Rev. Howard E. Spragg, Executive Vice President of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and the Rev. Robert Burt, General Secretary of the Division of Evangelism and Church Extension for the recognition of church growth.

Mr. Spragg said: "The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries is thoroughly committed to the United Church of Christ to do all that it can for the development of more churches and more members for the sake of God's mission. Church membership and church growth are intricate matters. We ought to take a long view of church membership, the rise and the falls, the fact that not every period in American history has there been the continual incline in terms of church membership statistics. In addition there are some non-theological factors such as the cleansing of the church rolls when a new minister begins his/her responsibilities, demographics, all the broad cultural changes such as occurred in the 60's and 70's."

"However, after all the discussion of history and the long perspective, the sociological analysis, the questions of who is counted and not counted, the demographics, and the attempt to get some perspective on the cultural changes, in the end it is a matter of an act of will. The United Church of Christ took an act of will when it adopted the New Initiatives in Church Development program. This program was launched and delivered in days when church membership growth was not particularly popular. In some Synods, speeches were made that we should forget completely about new church membership and growth, for there were more important matters before the world than matters of institutional self-concern."

"In the New Initiatives for Church Development program, the United Church of Christ committed itself to the starting and the renewing of local churches. The act of will is something more than what is done by the denomination. It is something that is required and done at the local level. The local church at Deering, New Hampshire, which now has a membership of 57, was at one time down to one member, but because of the determination of one member that that church in that place would not be closed. There is an act of will that is required, a commitment, a response to the mandate of the gospel, a response to the fundamental resurrection fact on which people were so convinced that there sprung up a community of faith and a mandate for apostleship and for the sake of the world."

Mr. Spragg called on Mr. Burt to make presentations to the representatives of churches to be honored. Mr. Burt said that for a moment, he would like to step out of his role to acknowledge with the General Synod that the youth at this Synod are terrific! He said: "The Division of Evangelism and Church Extension of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries celebrates the decision to make youth the General Synod's newest Priority. Growing churches attract youth and young adults, and we wish to assist in every possible way to carry that message to our churches across the homeland."

"Throughout Paul's letters to the early churches there is a marvelous phrase. The phrase is "bringing the faith"—bringing the faith to those who have not been claimed by the Gospel. This is one of the ways used by Paul to describe his missionary activity and this is one of the qualities of the churches to be honored tonight."

"The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries is proud to present to the Fourteenth General Synod eleven (11) of the fastest growing churches in our fellowship during the years 1980 and 1981. The name ascribed to this recognition is the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries' First Biennial Membership Growth Award."

"The first recipient is Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, IL. In the past 11 years, Trinity Church has grown in membership from fewer than 100 members to more than 3,000 members. It is a remarkable story of evangelism ministries with youth and young adults. In the years 1980 and 1981 alone, 1,297 new members were received." The Rev. Barbara Allen, Assistant Pastor, accepted the award for the church.

"The second recipient is Wayzata Community Church in Wayzata, MN, which during the years 1980 and 1981 received 358 new members." The Rev. Willard Albertson, Minister of Member Development, accepted the award for the church.

"The third recipient is the Dubbs Memorial United Church of Christ in Allentown, PA, which during the years 1980 and 1981 received 351 new members." Mr. Laurence Stamm, Head Deacon, accepted the award for the church.

"The fourth recipient is the Church of the Beatitudes, Phoenix, AZ, organized as a new church start in 1954. Today it has a membership of over 3,000. In 1980 and 1981, this church received 301 new members." The Rev. Dosia Carlson, Associate Pastor and Director of Center Door, and Mr. John Nye, past president of the church and