

¹A commonly accepted definition of the "family farm" as a farm operation in which the responsibility of ownership, management, labor (except at peak seasons) and financial risk is that of the family.

²The economic literature on economics of scale and farm size are voluminous and conclusive. A farm which fully employs one or two persons achieves lowest costs and optimum efficiencies. The classics in this literature are: J. Patrick Madden, *Economics of Size in Farming*, AER Report #107, USDA, 1967; Warren R. Bailey, *The One-Man Farm*, ERS-519, USDA, 1973; and Thomas A. Miller, et al, *Economics of Size in U.S. Field Corp Farming*, AER Report #472, USDA, 1981. The entire issue was reexamined by USDA as part of the "structure of agriculture" project conducted by the agency in 1980. It confirmed previous findings that "most of the technical economics . . . are attained at relatively small sizes" and concluded that "we have passed the point where any net gain to society can be claimed from policies that encourage large farms to become larger." (*A Time to Choose*, USDA, January, 1981).

³RURAL AMERICA: LIFE AND ISSUES, a Pronouncement of the Twelfth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, June, 1979.

The Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ in order to restore some integrity to farm tax and credit policies which have increasingly favored high-income, expanding farms at the expense of small and modest sized family farms in the U.S., calls upon the Congress and the Administration to develop and implement policies which:

1. Restore the limited resource loan program of loans to low-equity and low-income farms and establish it as the principle loan program of the FmHA;
2. Restructure eligibility guidelines for all other FmHA farm loan programs so that only family farms are eligible for this kind of assistance;
3. Provide protection for borrowers who through no fault of their own are unable to meet scheduled loan payment but who show evidence of ability to pay when agricultural prices stabilize at levels which afford them the opportunity to do so; specifically, loan deferrals should be granted on a case-by-case basis under provisions which guarantee full and fair consideration of each applicant for a deferral and which safeguard the procedural rights of the borrower, including the right of administrative appeal; and
4. Eliminate the use of the investment tax credit for specialized farm buildings for all but family farm operations and completely eliminate the use of investment tax credit for purchase of irrigation equipment which is used to irrigate land not considered to be irrigable within soil conservation standards.

The General Synod further calls upon the Instrumentalities and other national bodies, Conferences, Associations, and local congregations to advocate for and support such measures.

24. RESOLUTION ON CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Mr. Curry continued the report of Section II, referred the delegates to Advance Materials V, pages 132-134, to the

Section report and moved the adoption of the Resolution on Christian Environmental Stewardship. There was no discussion, and it was

83 GS 80 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution on Christian Environmental Stewardship.

RESOLUTION: CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Summary:

This resolution considers our Christian Stewardship of God's creation. It gives special emphasis to the issue of hazardous wastes. It calls on various aspects of our corporate church life as the United Church of Christ to take actions to promote environmental protection.

Background:

We have come to new awareness in recent years of humankind's relationship to all of God's creation on this globe. We have learned that we are part of an intricate ecosystem; that one form of life depends on another, and it, in turn, on another, so that we are woven together in a delicate web of life.

We also have become aware that the earth is finite; that resources are limited and cannot sustain unlimited growth. Oil, water, plant life, arable land, animal species have all suffered from careless stewardship by humankind. Creeping deserts, species extinction in alarming numbers, lowering water tables, polluted lakes, rivers, and even oceans, air carrying dangerous levels of pollutants—all point to the need for very serious concern for the environment that sustains all life, including human life.

Further, human population pressures threaten this balance, for our species has grown exponentially from 3.7 billion in 1971 to a projected 7 billion by the year 2000, if present rates continue. The United States has special responsibility. We are 6% of the world's population, yet we consume one-third of the earth's non-renewable resources.

Further, we practice, and have exported, a consumptive way of life with technologies and manufacturing practices that make gluttonous use of the earth's resources.

It is in this context that we confront the special issue of the hazardous wastes that are now threatening many aspects of our total environment.

Biblical/Theological Understandings:

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein . . ." (Ps. 24)

As a covenantal people we understand that we have responsibility as well as privilege. Therefore, to understand the world as God's creation is to understand our responsibility as God's stewards, and our accountability to God as tenants. This means that faithful human action is always aware of the nature of creation seeking to enhance and not to destroy what has been so richly provided. This means that what humankind produces should be in harmony with the laws that govern the natural order.

Christ pictures the importance of the faithful steward "whom the master will set over his household to give them their portion of food at the proper time," and, also, the punishment due the steward who knows the master's will but does not act accordingly. (Luke 12:41ff)

Ethical Consideration:

It is in the context of our stewardship that we must set the special problem of hazardous wastes that surfaced so dramatically in this decade. Toxic chemicals, spent nuclear fuels, hazardous substances, air pollutants—a variety of by-products of modern technologies now pose serious health risks to both present and future generations.

To date, we are not fully cognizant of the potential health hazards of toxic wastes. Unless immediate and stringent measures are taken, irreversible damage may be done. State and federal laws have not sufficiently developed to cope with this present and future threat. Enforcement of existing law has become a national crisis.

If the by-products of industry continue to produce hazardous waste at the present increasing rate, we can expect dangerous amounts of toxic substances polluting land, water, and air. Land resources, including aquifers, are threatened. Presently, “at least 50% of the U.S. ground water, the sole source of drinking water for half of all Americans is either contaminated or threatened with contamination.”

Facing up to these environmental issues will be costly. When jobs are so desperately needed environmental concern causes tensions within communities. We must be sensitive to this. However, we are accountable to future generations as well as to present needs.

The Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopts the following action plan:

1. Calls upon its members and all elements of its corporate life to pursue courses of action which promote environmental protection and social justice.
2. 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 investments as to corporate responsibility.
3. Calls upon the Office for Church in Society to include in its agenda concerns, which it monitors for church attention and legislative action, national environmental policy including the handling of hazardous wastes.
4. Urges appropriate Instrumentalities to engage in educational programs that will raise the consciousness of our churches and members to the seriousness of environmental issues. This should include educational materials directed toward both children and adults.
5. Calls on its member conferences and churches to investigate the adequacy of environmental policy and protection at state and local levels of government.

25. RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT OF VOTING ACCESSIBILITY FOR DISABLED PERSONS

Mr. Curry continued the report of Section II, referred the delegates to the New Business document, Part II, page 32, to the Section report and moved the adoption of the Resolution on Support of Voting Accessibility for Disabled Persons. There was no discussion, and it was

83 GS 81 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution on Support of Voting Accessibility for Disabled Persons.

RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT OF VOTING ACCESSIBILITY FOR DISABLED PERSONS

WHEREAS, 1983 has been established as the Religious Year of the Disabled; and

WHEREAS, 1983 through 1992 has been declared as the Decade of the Disabled, and

WHEREAS, the National Committee on Persons with Disabilities of the United Church of Christ strongly advocates for the right of the Disabled; and

WHEREAS, equal access to voting polls is a necessary step toward independent living;

THEREFORE, The Fourteenth General Synod supports and urges support on all levels, legislation that guarantees voting accessibility for disabled persons;

Urges the delegates of the Fourteenth General Synod to take back to their Conferences, Associations and local churches, the need to support such legislation.

26. RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT OF NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Curry continued the report of Section II, referred the delegates to Advance Materials V, pages 144-145, to the Section report and moved the adoption of the Resolution on Support of New Church Development. There was no discussion, and it was

83 GS 82 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution on Support of New Church Development.

RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT OF NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS, The United States has been and shall continue to experience a major migration of its population from the northern and mid-western states to the southern and western regions; and

WHEREAS, Ninety percent of the United States population growth has occurred in the southern and western regions between 1960 and 1980; and

WHEREAS, The United Church of Christ now has only 18% of its congregations in the western and southern regions; and

WHEREAS, During its twenty-five year history the United Church of Christ has experienced a net loss of approximately fifteen hundred churches and over one-half million members; and

WHEREAS, Between 1960 and 1980 the population of the United States has increased by 24% while the membership of the United Church of Christ has declined by 16%; and

WHEREAS, The strength of the United Church of Christ's ministry in all areas is directly related to the strength and viability of its institutional base as a truly national church;

The Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ strongly urges that the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, through its Division of Evangelism and Church Extension, re-affirm and strengthen its commitment of the mission of new church development throughout the United States with special emphasis in the southern and western regions.