

18. RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT OF CHRISTIANS WHO SERVE IN THE MILITARY

The Moderator called on Lorin Cope (OH) to continue the report for the Committee on Peace Resolutions. Mr. Cope referred the delegates to Advance Materials VI, page 17, to the Overture entitled Peace Issues, to report of the Committee, and moved the adoption of the Resolution on Support of Christians Who Serve in the Military. Mr. Cope noted the change in the title and changes in the body of the resolution. There was discussion, and it was

83 GS 95 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution on Support of Christians Who Serve in the Military.

RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT OF CHRISTIANS WHO SERVE IN THE MILITARY

Summary

Synod statements have given clear affirmation to those who support or serve in the military as Christians as well as those who do not. This overture seeks balanced, fair and full implementation of those earlier statements.

Biblical, Theological, Ethical Rationale

The Bible constantly holds out Peace as an ultimate and worthy goal. It is also not blind to the necessity, in the sinfulness of humankind, of military forces. While the military is not glorified and the nation of Israel in particular was warned from placing trust in military might (Chapters—Exodus 17:10-13; Joshua 5; Joshua 7; 2 Kings 3; Psalm 76; Isaiah 31), nowhere does Scripture condemn forces for national defense.

Centurions of the Roman army can be God-fearing and devout as illustrated in Matthew 8:5, 27, 54; Luke 7:1-5; and Acts 10:1. No one condemns them as in an unworthy profession. In Luke 3:14, John the Baptist accepts the validity of the soldier's vocation and encourages just standards in the administration of their duties. In each case these soldiers are vital and viable members of the early Christian community.

The United Church of Christ statements on Conscientious Objection (1961) and on Peace and the Resolution of Conflict (1981) to which this resolution refers are entirely in keeping with these Biblical passages. It behooves us to pursue zealously the cause of Peace while at the same time recognizing and affirming those who seek to keep that peace by being part of an armed force adequately chosen, equipped, trained, led and rewarded.

WHEREAS the Third General Synod of the United Church of Christ (1961) and the Executive Council in 1971 affirmed "The United Church of Christ desires to hold within its fellowship in love all those whose consciences are bound to Christ—those who accept the call to military service as well as those who refuse to participate in it"; and

WHEREAS the Thirteenth General Synod in its Resolution on Peace and the Resolution of Conflict opposed militarism, but also acknowledged the need for defense forces in today's society; and

WHEREAS there is a need for counseling materials expressing these views from the United Church of Christ perspective; and

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ strives to be a church inclusive of all whose consciences are bound to Christ.

THEREFORE the Fourteenth General Synod directs the appropriate Instrumentalities to develop and distribute materials supportive of those who choose to serve in the military and desire to be faithful Christians.

19. RESOLUTION ON WAR TAX RESISTANCE

Mr. Cope continued the report for the Committee on Peace Resolutions, referred the delegates to Advance Materials VI, page 20, to the Committee report, and moved the adoption of the Resolution on War Tax Resistance noting the change in the Resolution. There was discussion. A motion to terminate debate was adopted, and it was

83 GS 96 VOTED: The Fourteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution on War Tax Resistance.

RESOLUTION ON WAR TAX RESISTANCE

WHEREAS, Christians are citizens of nations as well as of the Kingdom of God and such dual citizenship can result in conflicts of conscience when seeking to be obedient to both; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ understands both church and state as functions of God's rule of righteousness, with neither an end in itself; and

WHEREAS, our nation has guaranteed freedom of religion and has resisted religious and political tyranny; and

WHEREAS, past General Synods of the United Church of Christ consistently have supported Christians who conscientiously opposed actions of the state that would force them to disobey the will of God as they understood it in Jesus Christ our Lord; and

WHEREAS, many of our own people are deeply troubled by the large numbers of tax revenues spent for military expenditures, particularly nuclear weapons and their potential for destruction of human life on earth created by God; and

WHEREAS, an increasing number of Christians find it unconscionable to pay taxes that might lead to such destruction;

THEREFORE, the Fourteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recognizes such agonies of conscience, supports and wishes to hold in communion those who, for reasons of conscience, refuse to pay taxes they believe will lead to war and to human destruction; and

Calls upon pastors, congregations, Conferences, officers and national bodies of the church, and specifically the Office for Church in Society, to provide information and counsel for those who are considering war tax resistance; and

Requests the Office for Church in Society to develop a network of support for such persons who conscientiously resist war tax payments; and

Reaffirms the action of the Eleventh General Synod in support of establishing a World Peace Tax Fund as an amendment to the Internal Revenue Code to provide that taxpayers conscientiously opposed to participation in war may elect to have their income, estate, or gift tax payments spent for non-military purposes.