

10. ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

The Moderator, Rev. John Krueger, introduced Rev. Christopher Noffke (MICH), Chairperson of Committee #27. Mr. Noffke noted a typographical error in the committee report. In the final paragraph, it should read:

"Friends for Life" instead of "Friends of Life."

On behalf of the committee, Mr. Noffke moved that the Fifteenth General Synod adopt "Acts of Violence Against Reproductive Health Care Facilities" as reported by the Committee.

Mr. Ben Smith (RM) made a motion, and the General Synod amended the first "Therefore Be It Resolved" paragraph by replacing paragraph "seeks" with "tends."

Discussion was concluded and

85-GS-43 VOTED: The Fifteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "Acts of Violence Against Reproductive Health Care Facilities."

ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

WHEREAS, we affirm the right of all persons to express publicly their religious convictions on issues affecting the society in which we live, and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge the divided opinion expressed in church and society regarding the right of a woman to choose a safe and legal abortion, and

WHEREAS, we affirm that God alone may judge the purposes of the heart, and

WHEREAS, our understanding of the gospel calls us to bring a message of peace and reconciliation to the concerns of the society in which we live, and

WHEREAS, recent expressions against persons and facilities offering reproductive choices for women have taken on an increasingly violent nature, including bombing of facilities, death threats to clinic staff and to clinic personnel, physical and psychological harassment to those seeking to use reproductive health facilities and their families, and

WHEREAS, specific acts of violence as reported to the National Abortion Federation have increased from nine in 1981 to 166 in 1984 and five in the first months of 1985, including 29 specific incidents of bombing and arson in 1984, and

WHEREAS, violence against reproductive health care facilities endangers public safety, discourages the use of clinics for family planning, leading to more unplanned pregnancy, and makes health professionals reluctant to work in family planning clinics,

THEREFORE, the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

Calls upon the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, United Church of Christ Friends for Life, and others with differing opinions on abortion and family planning, to monitor and modify language which tends to inflame rather than inform the ongoing public dialogue on abortion.

Directs the Executive Council to call upon the FBI Director to recognize these threats and bombings as dangerous acts of terrorism and to vigorously pursue the perpetrators of these terrorist acts.

Urges the conferences and local churches to call upon state and city governments to recognize these threats and bombings as dangerous acts of terrorism and to vigorously pursue the perpetrators of such terrorist acts, and

Calls upon local church members to offer themselves as escorts for clients of reproductive health care facilities.

Financial implications: None

11. FULL PARTICIPATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

The Moderator introduced Rev. Jack Belsom of Ohio, Chairperson of Committee #15, who moved on behalf of the committee that the Fifteenth General Synod adopt the resolution, "Full Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Life of the Church." Mr. Belsom spoke to the motion. Debate was closed, and

85-GS-44 VOTED: The Fifteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "Full Participation of Persons With Disabilities in the Life of the Church."

FULL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

SUMMARY

The General Synod is urged to assist persons with disabilities to gain greater participation in the life and operation of the church. This resolution calls upon the General Synod and the national denomination to provide the necessary information and resources to local churches, associations and conferences on meeting the needs of persons with disabilities by working with them and not doing things for them.

It calls, also, upon General Synod to make fuller participation of persons with disabilities by initiating action steps for including persons with disabilities in all aspects of the life of the church.

BACKGROUND AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th General Synods affirmed and reaffirmed (over 29 times) the full participation in the life and leadership of persons with disabilities in the life and society of the church. Although some progress has been made, there is more work ahead of us to make the symbol of the church "THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE" truly inclusive. We are both a church united and uniting, a community of faith, responding to God's healing, reconciling, and empowering work in Christ. The mission of Jesus meant good news for the poor, release for captives, recovering of sight for the blind, and freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:18). As signs of his ministry, Jesus pointed to its gifts for the blind and the lame, lepers, the deaf (Matthew 1:4-6) and called his followers to continue the ministry of reconciliation that God carried out in Him (2 Cor. 5:18). We are reminded, especially in the church, that "if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Cor. 12:26). Within the human society are some people identified in common language and in public law as "handicapped." They bear in evident and painful ways the fragility of all life. The strongest of human beings are at any moment only a microbe or accident away from the ailments and disabilities that are conspicuous in others. The mingling of strength and frailty in the human race and in every individual are constant reminders of our Christian ministry.

Persons with Disabilities will no longer remain hidden from society by being kept "out of sight out of mind." There is a growing need for the talents of all of God's children to be