

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

responsive to the call of service in the service of all personhood, whether through volunteerism or seeking a job based on a given "call" after an extensive education. We are asking you to remember the various contributions made by persons with disabilities in the past, such people as Albert Einstein, Helen Keller, Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas A. Edison, to name but a few. Employing persons with disabilities should be the least problem in our churches. The past (4) Synods have addressed attitudinal changes. We ask now for the next step; full inclusion into the life and workings of the church.

WHEREAS, there are over 36 million persons with disabilities in the United States, and that number is increasing daily and,

WHEREAS, the past four Synods have affirmed and reaffirmed the full participation of persons with disabilities in the life and leadership of the church and society, and

WHEREAS, through the completion and return of the Accessibility Chart mailed to each church (a 90% return), we applaud the progress being made by our churches, yet recognize that deficiencies are still present.

The Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ

- 1) challenges each church to raise its own aggregate score on the Accessibility Chart by a minimum of 20% by June, 1987.
- 2) urges associations, conferences, and instrumentalities and other national bodies to plan and hold their meetings in accessible locations.
- 3) calls upon the denomination to continue to monitor governmental actions that will have an impact upon the quality of life of persons with disabilities and to inform the instrumentalities and other national bodies, church related institutions, conferences, associations, local churches, and advocates for persons with disabilities of these changes.
- 4) recommends that local churches, associations, conferences, and instrumentalities and other national bodies seek out persons with disabilities to become actively involved in all aspects of the church. Further, the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recommends to the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries the following action steps for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including employment opportunities, as guidelines for becoming more open:

Leadership Training: To begin a program, by January 1986, to educate staff members of conferences and associations in ways to provide leadership training to local churches and other church related institutions regarding the issue of inclusiveness. In addition, attention should focus on the future professional and volunteer employment in all aspects of the Church for persons with various disabilities.

Self-Evaluation Studies: To develop by March 1986, instruments, including models, to enable local churches and church related institutions to evaluate themselves and their facilities in terms of architectural, attitudinal, and programmatic accessibility and functionality, including a compilation of areas of need, and the cost necessary to meet those needs. Employment of all persons with disabilities, including clergy should be considered.

Transition Plan: To develop by October 1986, a process to implement the areas of change as determined by the local churches and church related institutions. An effort should be made to monitor and assist in the actual implementation of the above.

Further, it is requested that a progress report be submitted to the Sixteenth General Synod.

Financial Implications: Fifty thousand dollars for each of three consecutive years subject to the availability of funds.

12. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The Moderator next introduced Rev. James Bowley, Chairperson of Committee #16, who pointed out that in the report of Committee #16, the word "therefore" should be inserted in front of "Be It Resolved" in the first paragraph, and that the two paragraphs of the report will replace the final paragraph printed in the Advance Materials Section III, page 15. On behalf of the Committee, Mr. Bowley moved that the Fifteenth General Synod adopt, "A Resolution on Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action."

There was debate and an amendment was moved and defeated to strike "protected class" from the last paragraph. Debate was closed, and

85-GS-45 VOTED: The Fifteenth General Synod adopted the Resolution "Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action."

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Coordinator is charged with the responsibility of monitoring the employment and hiring policies of the United Church of Christ, relative to equal hiring and placement of minorities on Boards, Agencies and staff of the United Church of Christ; and

WHEREAS, the United Church Board for World Ministries has had intentional efforts to implement and encourage full participation of minorities in the mission of the World Board through overseas placement, service on boards and agencies by appointing Mr. Richard Stenhouse as a consultant to the United Black Christians of the UCC for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, the United Black Christians have passed a resolution in support of these actions on the part of the United Church Board for World Ministries;

THEREFORE, the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms the effort of the United Church Board for World Ministries to place minorities in its mission service and further encourages a continued intentional effort to that end;

FURTHER, the Fifteenth General Synod directs the Coordinator of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action to give its intentional support to the placement of under represented protected class individuals by working in close cooperation with the Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Coordinator.

At this time, Mr. Bowley introduced Mr. Jesse Alexander, EEO/Affirmative Action Coordinator of the United Church of Christ.