

there is suffering, hurt, and alienation. It is the responsibility of Christian people to address moral and ethical issues, and to work for a strong and healthy school system so essential to the public welfare and the common good. A strong public school system producing thoughtful and responsible young people and adults, will ultimately protect the freedom of churches to do their essential but different work.

The United Church of Christ has an important contribution to make to educational reform and renewal because of its past commitment, its morally sensitive assessment of the present situation, and its faithful vision for the future. Therefore,

we call schools to excellence in developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes, recognizing that literacy and learning are essential for intellectual and spiritual growth;

we call schools to justice and equity, supporting equal access to an education that challenges all persons to achieve their greatest potential, and we advocate more equitable distribution of state and federal funds to accomplish this purpose;

we urge the maintenance of school systems that are accountable to local and regional electorates, financed by public tax revenues, and responsible to State standards for curriculum and teacher certification;

we advocate more equitable distribution of state and federal funds for poor, minority and gifted students with special needs who are "at risk" of failure in both urban and rural areas;

we reaffirm the 1954 Supreme Court decision that separate schools are inherently unequal, and we call upon churches and communities to face de facto segregation and to wrestle with the racism and racial isolation that result in inferior education;

we endorse a strong federal role in education in the areas of equity, civil rights, and research;

we encourage the development of intentional partnerships between churches and schools, including but not limited to tutoring, counselling, recruitment of volunteers, programs of parental involvement, provision of resources and equipment, and membership in citizen advisory and advocacy groups;

we resist the pressures on public schools from sectarian religious groups and ideologies, while we strongly endorse teaching about religion in relation to history, literature, the fine arts, and world cultures; and

we defend the right of parents to choose alternative, private, religious, or independent schools, but continue to declare that those schools should be funded by private sources of income.

12. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr. Douglas Hatfield moved adoption of the Proposal for Action on Public Education.

85-GS-86 VOTED: The Fifteenth General Synod adopts the Proposal for Action on Public Education:

PROPOSAL FOR ACTION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to public education, and

WHEREAS, public education has become a major concern on the national and state levels, and

WHEREAS, the current priorities of the United Church of Christ, especially Family Life and Youth and Young Adult Ministries, are closely related to this concern;

THEREFORE, the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon its churches, conferences, and national instrumentalities:

to work for the next two years on the issues of public education, studying all reports and recommendations, formulating approaches, and preparing a report for the Sixteenth General Synod;

to develop strategies for making public education at all levels, (elementary, secondary, higher, adult, and continuing), a major concern of the United Church of Christ; and

to cooperate, wherever possible, with other denominations in the pursuit of these ends.

Specifically, we call upon

1. Local churches, to identify and recognize educators in their congregations; support teaching as a Christian vocation; recruit qualified persons to serve on school boards and committees and as volunteers and aides; set up seminars and forums for the discussion of issues; develop stronger family and parent cooperation; and initiate more responsible community participation.
2. Conferences, to designate a staff person with a public education portfolio; form a public education task force, promote cooperative programs with public schools and with our church-related colleges, build networks and coalitions on a state-wide level, and monitor state legislation, policy, and curriculum development.
3. The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to form an inter-agency public education task force among national bodies and instrumentalities to develop policies and positions, monitor national legislation as well as judicial and executive decisions, initiate contacts with national education groups, build national networks and coalitions; publish resources on the issues, and provide funding through conferences for projects that serve students "at risk."

Note: The implementation of this Proposal for Action is subject to the availability of funds.

13. MS. HARRIET MCGEEHAN HONORED BY STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

The Moderator announced that Ms. Harriet McGeehan, a member of the Executive Council and from Penn Northeast Conference, had just been named a distinguished daughter of Pennsylvania for 1985 by Governor Richard Thornburgh. Ms. McGeehan was nominated by the Pennsylvania Commission for Women of which she is a member.

14. MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER, UCC EXPRESSION STATISTICS

Statistics just released by the National Board of the United Church of Christ Expression of Marriage Encounter indicate that from 1974 to 1984 the first ten years, 17,150 persons have experienced a Marriage Encounter Weekend.