

moral ambiguity and urging that alternatives to abortion always be fully and carefully considered, and

WHEREAS, women and men must make decisions about unplanned or unwanted pregnancies that involve their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, and

WHEREAS, the United States leads nearly all other developed nations of the world in pregnancy, abortion, and childbearing rates for teen-agers, and

WHEREAS, access to birth control is being jeopardized by decreases in Federal funding for human services, including family planning programs, and certain groups continue their efforts to reverse the Roe vs. Wade decision of 1973, which affirms the right to choose a safe and legal abortion, and

WHEREAS, abortion is a social justice issue, both for parents dealing with pregnancy and parenting under highly stressed circumstances, as well as for our society as a whole, and

WHEREAS, previous General Synods have called upon the church to provide programs of counseling and education about the meaning and nature of human life, sexuality, responsible parenthood, population control, and family life.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Sixteenth General Synod:

1. Affirms the sacredness of all of life, and the need to protect and defend human life in particular;
2. Encourages persons facing unplanned pregnancies to consider giving birth and parenting the child or releasing the child for adoption before considering abortion;
3. Upholds the right of men and women to have access to adequately funded family planning services, and to safe, legal abortions as one option among others;
4. Affirms the need for adequately funded support systems, including health and day care services, for those who choose to raise children;
5. Urges that resources on human sexuality being prepared by the Board for Homeland Ministries be used widely in the churches, and that the Resolutions of previous General Synods on sexuality issues be distributed and studied as part of these resources;
6. Urges the United Church of Christ, at all levels, to provide support, resources, and information to persons facing unplanned pregnancies, including counseling of persons who choose to have abortions;
7. Urges the United Church of Christ, at all levels, to provide educational resources and programs to persons, especially young persons, to help reduce the incidence of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, and to encourage responsible approaches to sexual behavior;
8. Urges pastors, members, local churches, conferences, and instrumentalities to oppose actively legislation and amendments which seek to revoke or limit access to safe and legal abortions.

11. NEW BUSINESS RESOLUTION "TRAVEL BAN TO NICARAGUA"

The Moderator called on Mr. Norman Van Klompenburg, Chairperson of the Executive Council. Mr. Van Klompenburg called on Ms. Gretchen Eick of the Office for Church in Society to introduce the new business "Travel to Nicaragua." The adoption of this action was moved.

Two amendments were made to this action were to add after the final sentence of #3, "It would also effectively allow our government to pursue its hostile efforts against the legal government of Nicaragua with impunity." and to add a final paragraph to the end of the Resolution.

87-GS-113 VOTED: The Sixteenth General Synod adopts the action "Travel Ban to Nicaragua" as amended.

Travel Ban To Nicaragua

Background

1. The Sixteenth General Synod referred the Pennsylvania Southeast Resolution on Nicaragua to the Office for Church in Society and the United Church Board for World Ministries because it did not represent new policy (Synod had acted on comprehensive policy toward Central America two years ago). This development in the House of Representatives is new, and requires new policy. Because the final disposition of this travel ban will be made by a conference committee of the House and Senate in July, this matter cannot wait for Executive Council action.
2. A ban on travel leaving to the President's discretion the definition of what travel is banned, would allow the banning of Witness for Peace and other groups as well as travel of missionaries and any United States citizens providing assistance to the victims of the contra war. For example, a project of our partner church association in Nicaragua, CEPAD, which supplies materials for the construction of artificial limbs for the victims of the contra war, could be stopped completely.
3. As the Iran Contra Hearings have revealed, the Executive Branch has gone to great lengths, including violations of United States law, to prosecute its war against Nicaragua's government. Stopping travel to Nicaragua would render the United States public dependent on information supplied by the Executive Branch about the situation in Nicaragua. It would be a profound violation of our constitutional right to information and to dissent. It would also effectively allow our government to pursue its hostile efforts against the legal government of Nicaragua with impunity.
4. Congress has two opportunities to remove this offensive travel ban provision in the conference committee which will reconcile the House version of this State Department Authorization with the Senate version (containing no ban as it comes from committee and to be voted on the Senate floor in July) and, if not deleted there, by defeating final passage of the bill so long as it contains any travel ban.

Resolution

The Sixteenth General Synod, through the Office of the President of the Church, through its ministers, and through its members, communicates to members of the House of Representatives and Senate of the United States before July 15, its dismay and opposition to the Walker/Smith amendment to the State Department Authorization bill, which bans some travel by United States citizens to Nicaragua (and other Central American countries), and leaves it to the President and State Department to determine what travel constitutes "assisting the military operations of the government of Nicaragua" (or "assisting the military operations of groups President Reagan names as 'communist')." The Synod urges members of the House and Senate to remove this travel ban provision in conference committee, and to oppose final passage of this bill if it contains any ban on travel by U. S. citizens to Central America.

The Sixteenth General Synod also urges Congress to eliminate from the bill another travel ban provision passed by the House which forbids representatives of 17 governments, including Nicaragua, as well as representatives of the African National Congress, SWAPO, and the PLO, from traveling in the United States outside of Washington and New York. Such a ban on travel severely restricts the right of our citizens to information and is a form of censorship which democracy cannot allow.