

**5. SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT HONORING CONFERENCE MINISTERS OF PENN NORTHEAST CONFERENCE**

The Moderator called on Mr. Don Penfield (PNE), who asked the Synod to remember Rev. William T. Longsdorf, who died during this past biennium while serving as Conference Minister of the Penn Northeast Conference, and to recognize Rev. Cynthia J. Scanlin, Interim Conference Minister, and Rev. Donald E. Overlock, newly-elected Conference Minister.

**6. REFERRAL OF THE PROPOSED PRONOUNCEMENT "THE SPIRITUAL CRISIS OF THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE"**

The Moderator called on Rev. Carole Baker, Chairperson of Committee 4, who referred the delegates to the Advance Materials and moved that the Sixteenth General Synod refer the Proposed Pronouncement "The Spiritual Crisis of the Church in Relation to Personal Stewardship and Economic Justice" to the Stewardship Council, asking that the Council prepare a Pronouncement to be presented to the Seventeenth General Synod.

Mr. Richard Vaught (OHIO) moved an amendment to substitute the original Pronouncement as the motion. Debate was closed, and the motion was defeated.

Discussion was held on the motion with no negative discussion.

87-GS-56 Voted: The Sixteenth General Synod refers the Proposed Pronouncement "The Spiritual Crisis of the Church in Relation to Personal Stewardship and Economic Justice" to the Stewardship Council and directs the Council to prepare a Pronouncement to be presented to General Synod Seventeen regarding personal stewardship and the idolatry of mammon, in light of the work of the Task Force on Christian Faith and Economic Life; and further directs the Stewardship Council, as soon as possible, to encourage local congregations to engage in a study of these issues, recognizing the power of the questions contained in Section II (Background) of the Proposed Pronouncement.

**7. PRONOUNCEMENT "A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST MINISTRY WITH INDIANS"**

The Moderator called on Ms. Betty Kingsbury, Chairperson of Committee 7, to present the recommended actions from Committee 7.

Ms. Kingsbury referred the delegates to the Pronouncement received in the advance materials and moved the Sixteenth General Synod adopt "A Proposed Pronouncement: A United Church of Christ Ministry With Indians." After discussion it was, unanimously,

87-GS-57 Voted: The Sixteenth General Synod adopts the Pronouncement "A United Church of Christ Ministry With Indians."

**Pronouncement**

**A United Church of Christ Ministry with Indians**

**Summary**

A growing concern over both the substance of the United Church of Christ mission with regard to Indian people and issues and the mechanisms for implementing the mission led to a thorough review by the Executive Council. The situation of United Church of Christ Indian local churches was deteriorating, ordained pastoral leadership was becoming rare, and it was not clear what the major policy goals were. Addition-

ally, the justice issues were not being adequately addressed, particularly in view of the apparent backing away by the federal government from its obligations originally defined by various treaties and other agreements. This Pronouncement reaffirms the General Synod's commitment to a mission with Indian people, identifies basic policy goals for the mission, affirms support for Indian justice issues through treaty observance and meeting of basic needs, and identifies the Council for American Indian Ministry as the primary body (the whole United Church of Christ is responsible) to plan for Indian ministry in the United Church of Christ.

**Background**

The Executive Council consultation reviewed the history of The Council for American Indian Ministry from its beginning. The twenty-three Indian churches now have become twenty-four with the addition of All Nations Indian United Church of Christ in Minneapolis, an Indian New Initiatives in Church Development new church. In reviewing the situation in the communities where United Church of Christ Indian congregations are located, the Consultation found that reservation conditions remained about the same, while serious attrition has worked away at the churches.

The following observations attempt to provide a context for the United Church of Christ mission with American Indians today.

1. Unemployment in the communities where our United Church of Christ congregations are located ranges usually from 70% to 90%. Rural poverty, without economic development, produces a despair that leads to other problems.
2. Alcoholism, and other forms of substance abuse (including inhalant abuse), has touched every family, and about 90% of individuals in the communities. Children are becoming addicted sometimes as early as their fourth or fifth year.
3. The Spiritual devastation that resulted from the multi-dimensional experience of genocide which has been followed by policies and laws that continue oppression created a despair, a spiritual vacuum, high suicide rates, (particularly among children and teens), and a seriously low sense of self-worth. Indian reaction has been a slow, but authentic, renaissance to value Indian traditions, and to indigenize non-native religions.
4. There are concerted efforts by varieties of groups receiving support from various governmental agencies to abrogate treaties, hunting and fishing agreements, Indian health programs and other parts of decisions made with the federal government in exchange for land through treaties. Jurisdictional disputes have developed. Some long time observers diagnose a growing racism in and around the Indian communities of the reservations. In some places the conflict has not been far from open violence.
5. The heritage of the mission movement which founded the Indian churches has a profound ambiguity. While it did leave the heritage of the faith, it used what has been described as a "hardware" approach, insisting that Euro-North American culture was a necessary part of the Gospel, and so Indian ways had to go. Leadership development that could lead to self-determination has never been a component of the Indian mission. From the 1960's with a few notable exceptions, most congregations have had to rely for leadership on lay licensed ministers or clergy (sometimes not ordained) from other denominations. Ordained clergy who served were usually overcome by the isolation and hopelessness of the setting, and they left after short pastorates. The exclusive use of licensed ministers has become a strategy of attrition.
6. The communities where our United Church of Christ con-

gregations are located may be the only authentic poverty culture for a whole people in our church. The combination of all the above means there is no such thing as a self-supporting Indian congregation. Indian people are prisoners of their reservation environment, bound by the unbreakable bindings of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) regulations and laws. Poverty, leadership issues, deep-seated conflicts within the congregations all point to the need for an effective intervention in the present policies.

7. The legal history between the United States and the various Indian nations is much too complex and long to attempt to summarize here. Indians do not have many of the rights guaranteed through the Constitution. The Tee-Hit-Ton Doctrine illustrates the legal issue. "In the Tee-Hit-Ton Doctrine, the Supreme Court ruled that the United States government is free to take or confiscate Indian land without due process of law and without fair-market compensation."(1)

#### Biblical, Theological and Ethical Rationale

"I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey . . . ." (Exodus 3:7-8)

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest.' " (Matthew 9:36-38)

The text from Exodus may seem ironic, for this text has been used to begin a series of historical analogies which eventually led to a justification of manifest destiny. Manifest destiny became the heretical rationalization which led to the genocide of the Native people, their culture and their ways. And yet, it also describes the experience of Indian people today, suffering under the taskmasters of the dominant culture which expects assimilation, of the law which finds ways to approve of taking land and other benefits away from Indian people, and of the grinding boots of poverty and racism. Deliverance from all of these is the imminent hope of Indian people.

Several contemporary theologies have affirmed that God has preferential option for the poor and the oppressed. If that be the case, God must have a deep preference for the American Indian people today. Just as Christ has compassion for the crowds, the Church must have a compassion for Indian folk who appear harassed, hopeless and helpless. The call is as loud today as ever: there is overwhelming work to be done in Indian communities, but there are too few laborers. Christ calls, and the United Church of Christ is in a position to provide a response.

"Thus a scan of Jewish history in the Old Testament reveals a dialectic between . . . elect status as God's chosen people and humble awareness of one's solidarity with the entire human family."(2) The contemporary church struggles with the same dialectic between feeling itself to be the body of the elect, yet constantly called to the depth and breadth of its mission with American Indians. The theological implications of the genocide have scarcely been assessed by those in the dominant culture.

Indian people need the love of God's creativity, the United Church of Christ has the resources to renew the mission, and the people of this nation have serious theological work to do.

#### Statement of Christian Conviction

The General Synod reaffirms the commitment of the United Church of Christ to American Indian Ministries. The General Synod calls for instrumentalities and conferences:

- to affirm support for Indian congregations,
- to provide for competent and faithful pastoral ministries,
- to support the observance of Indian treaties.

The General Synod requests all parts of the United Church of Christ to urge the federal government to maintain its historic obligations to the Indian people, particularly in relation to Indian health, and to support the fight for justice by the various Indian nations as specific issues emerge from time to time that threaten their integrity, and due process is ignored.

The General Synod adopts the following directions for a ministry to, with, and from American Indians:

1. The underlying goal of Indian ministry for the next decade will be the development of indigenous Indian churches as faithful and working parts of the United Church of Christ. The General Synod encourages The Council for American Indian Ministry to lead Indian people to develop an Indian expression of the Christian faith that will be a gift to the Church as well as an effective means of evangelism in Indian communities.
2. In developing local Indian churches the following special focii will provide the directions for ministry:
  - A. The development and encouragement of a faith community which the members experience as a source of nurture and personal strengthening. This calls for faithful worship with preaching that connects the Gospel to the issues of Indian life, pastoral care for all families, with constant attention given to the sick and the aged.
  - B. The priority of programs for children and youth. The churches will need to explore the best means to reach young people for Christian nurture, confirmation, and faith development.
  - C. The identification and recruitment of Indian young people and those open to a second career to prepare for the ordained ministry of Indian churches. Provision of scholarship aid, emotional support, and cultural assistance as they leave the reservation for college and seminary will be necessary for young people to secure a theological education in preparation for ministry.
  - D. The enabling of congregations to be in ministry to the community in which they are located. Congregations are urged to undertake community development tasks and ethical/moral stands on issues of vital importance, including consequential Indian justice issues, and work for economic development.
  - E. The equipping of the pastors and churches to engage in the war against alcoholism, substance abuse, and human abuse in the communities. The churches are urged to be involved in educational, preventative, intervention, and therapeutic programs and strategies to engage in these battles.
3. Developing a special recruitment, training and continuing education and support program for pastors to work in teams on the reservations to accomplish the mission of the local congregations.
4. Creating alliances, mechanisms and coalitions to engage in the unending fight for justice for Indian people to maintain treaty observance, to work for economic development and for the honoring of the Indian traditions.

Footnotes

1. Coulter, Robert T., "The Moral Crisis of the Law," Church and Society, January/February, 1985, page 26.
2. Senior, Donald and Stuhmueller, Carroll, The Biblical Foundations for Mission, Orbis Books, page 320.

**8. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION "A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST MINISTRY WITH INDIANS"**

Ms. Kingsbury referred the delegates to the Proposal for Action received in the advance materials and moved the Sixteenth General Synod adopt a proposal for action, "A United Church of Christ Ministry with Indians."

Rev. David Hirano of the Business Committee moved to amend the proposal for action by adding the following two sentences: "A Coordinating Committee formed by staff representatives from the Executive Office, UCBHM, OCLL, OCIS, Stewardship Council and CRJ, chaired by the Executive Director of CAIM, shall meet at least once a year to implement this proposal for action." "The Executive Director of CAIM will be a member of the United Church of Christ Executives."

There was discussion and a friendly amendment to the amendment was accepted to add the words, "The General Synod recommends that" as a preface to the last sentence of the amendment. After discussion it was moved to accept the amendment.

87-GS-58 Voted: The Sixteenth General Synod adopts the Proposal For Action "A United Church of Christ Ministry With Indians" as amended.

**Proposal for Action  
A United Church of Christ Ministry with Indians**

Summary

This Proposal for Action outlines the mandate for the Council for American Indian Ministry, provides for The Council for American Indian Ministry's funding, and outlines mechanisms for instrumentalities, national bodies, conferences and local churches to participate in the mission with Indians.

Background Statement

This Proposal for Action is based on the Pronouncement, "A United Church of Christ Ministry with Indians," adopted by the Sixteenth General Synod. The Pronouncement presents a policy statement for the United Church of Christ Indian work, and this Proposal for Action provides for the program directions, mechanisms for implementation, funding, and assigns primary responsibility to the Council for American Indian Ministry to plan and collaborate with other bodies in the church in accomplishing the mission.

Implementation

The Council for American Indian Ministry is the primary implementor of this Proposal for Action, with the cooperation of instrumentalities and national bodies, conferences and local churches.

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

Directional Statement and Goals

The Sixteenth General Synod establishes the following mandate for the Council for American Indian Ministry:

The Council for American Indian Ministry is the General Synod's primary national body and resource to the Church on

issues relating to American Indians. The Council shall support and give general direction to the Indian congregations of the United Church of Christ, urging the congregations to participate in the life of the conferences in which they are located. The Council shall assist the General Synod and its Executive Council in formulating a policy for American Indian Ministry for the United Church of Christ, and work collaboratively with the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries as that Board fulfills its mandate for the homeland mission. It shall give leadership to all cooperating bodies in implementing the mission with American Indians.

The Council shall consult with and provide available resources to conferences with Indian people but without Indian United Church of Christ congregations. It shall be an advocate for Indian justice, collaborating with the Office for Church in Society in educating the United Church of Christ and influencing public policy on Indian issues. It will provide United Church of Christ representation in Indian ecumenical bodies, such as the Indian Ministries Task Force of the Joint Strategy and Action Committee. It shall provide a center for Indian people of the United Church of Christ not involved in the Indian churches that there may develop a fellowship of Indian people and a means for them to give support to Indian issues and churches.

The Council for American Indian Ministry shall be governed by its own Bylaws, which shall be in conformity with the Constitution and Bylaws of the United Church of Christ. The Council is authorized under Article IX, Paragraph 65 of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ. It shall be accountable to the General Synod through the Executive Council in a manner designed by the Executive Council, and it shall have two associate delegates to the General Synod. It shall organize itself and call its own staff.

Funding

The Council for American Indian Ministry shall be funded from one-third of the net income of the Neighbors in Need Offering.

Mechanisms for the Implementation of a United Church of Christ Indian Ministry

The Council for American Indian Ministry shall be accountable to the General Synod through its Executive Council in a manner defined by those bodies. The Council for American Indian Ministry's work with the instrumentalities and other national bodies shall be correlated by the General Synod and the Executive Council.

The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries is recognized by the General Synod "as the instrumentality of the United Church of Christ for the planning and conduct of the homeland mission not otherwise assigned" (Article 54). The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and The Council for American Indian Ministry are requested to clarify their partnership in this particular homeland mission in a way congruent with these actions. The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and the Council for American Indian Ministry will continue a constructive liaison relationship to serve at least the following purposes: to develop a strong program to implement Indian ministry; to facilitate the flow of useful information about Indian concerns between the two bodies; to focus resources in a strategic way to accomplish the mission.

The Office for Church Life and Leadership will work with The Council for American Indian Ministry on ministerial issues, including theological education, pastoral training, ministerial standing, continuing education and resource development.