

## MONDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 29

pressed what we believe to be just the beginning for Hispanics. However, our church's neglectful response over the past 10 years has now compelled us to conclude that nothing, or very little, will be done.

"Our soul is hurting and our hearts are broken! It is, therefore, with a profound sense of corporate loss that we must leave you now! We will return to hear your response to our claim for justice."

The Hispanic delegation walked out of the Public Auditorium.

### 15. POSTPONEMENT OF DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSAL FOR ACTION "THE HISPANIC MINISTRY OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST"

Ms. Bland referred the delegates to the Committee 5 report of

the Proposal for Action and moved that the Sixteenth General Synod adopt the Proposal for Action "The Hispanic Ministry of the United Church of Christ."

Rev. Edward Walker moved that the discussion of the Proposal for Action on the Hispanic Ministry be postponed to a time determined by the Business Committee in order that the Hispanic brothers and sisters might be present to speak to this proposal, pro or con. It was agreed to postpone this item until the Hispanic members returned to the plenary.

### 16. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Moderator called on Secretary Brun for announcements.

### 17. RECESS

The Moderator declared the meeting in recess until 1:30 p.m.

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### 1. CALL TO ORDER

The Moderator, Mr. Kenneth P. Stewart, called the General Synod to order at 1:30 p.m.

### 2. SPEAK OUT

The Moderator called on the Secretary, Rev. Carol Joyce Brun, to conduct the Speak Out, which was a time for delegates and visitors to speak for up to one minute on matters of concern that are not on the business agenda of the General Synod. Some of the subjects presented during Speak Out were

A reading of a list of the churches which are open and affirming, as follows:

Riverside Church, New York, NY; Riverside-Salem Church, Grand Island, NY; Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ, Chicago, IL; La Mesa Community Church, Santa Barbara, CA; Grace United Church of Christ, Norton, OH; The Church of the Covenant, Boston, MA; First Congregational Church, Amherst, MA; Church of the United Community, Roxbury, MA; Peace United Church of Christ, Oakland, CA; First Congregational Church of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN; First Congregational United Church of Christ, Washington, DC; College Avenue Congregational, Modesto, CA; Amherst Community Church, Buffalo, NY; First Congregational, Alameda, CA; and Altadena Congregational, Altadena, CA.

A statement that in the UCC inclusive language is used too often in lieu of scripture.

Concern expressed about human rights in Hungary.

Two statements on the courage of Lesbian/Gay Coalition at this Synod and an affirmation of the Lesbian/Gay Coalition and their stand.

Recognition of the extensive UCC camping programs for youth and young adults.

Thanks for worship leaders and for traditional and innovative aspects of worship with a plea to treat musical offerings as gifts - not as entertainment. No applause at worship services.

Support of Public Education.

### 3. ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGENDA FOR COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR MONDAY AFTERNOON

Mr. Stewart reminded the delegates that each report had 25

minutes only. Mr. Stewart suggested that the agenda be modified so that the Pronouncement on Hispanic Ministry of the United Church of Christ be postponed until that body returned to the General Synod floor. The order of the day would be Committees 8, 11, 9, 13, 26, and 21.

The Moderator called for the report of Committee 8.

### 4. PRONOUNCEMENT "FULFILLING GOD'S COVENANT WITH ALL CHILDREN"

Ms. Janet Lyons (CONN), Chairperson of Committee 8, presented the recommendations from that committee. She referred the body to the report.

Ms. Lyons thanked Ms. Pat Conover and Ms. Nanette Roberts for their work on the Proposed Pronouncement "Fulfilling God's Covenant with All Children."

A motion was made to add the word "physically" before "emotionally" and to delete paragraph 4 of section 4.

A motion was made and carried to vote separately on the amendments.

87-GS-61 VOTED: The Sixteenth General Synod separates the amendment concerning the Proposed Pronouncement "Fulfilling God's Covenant with All Children."

87-GS-62 VOTED: The Sixteenth General Synod amends the Proposed Pronouncement "Fulfilling God's Covenant with All Children," by adding the word "physically" before "emotionally."

The motion to delete paragraph 4 was defeated. The delegates then acted on the main motion which was the Pronouncement.

87-GS-63 VOTED: The General Synod adopts the Pronouncement "Fulfilling God's Covenant With All Children" as amended.

### Pronouncement Fulfilling God's Covenant With All Children

#### Summary

Calls upon the United Church of Christ to intensify its long-standing commitment to economic and social justice through support of specific policies which help, empower, and sustain all children, particularly those children most in need. Children deserve the opportunity to uncover and nurture their gifts, to

grow into their callings, to make appropriate contributions to their societies, to share in the abundance of the created world, and to command the resources to live life abundantly.

#### Background

The United Church of Christ has a long tradition of affirming public policies which generate and distribute resources in ways that provide all people with the potential to live full lives. Policies to overcome poverty and encourage a positive economy were supported by the Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh and Thirteenth General Synods. In affirming a Just Peace, the Fifteenth General Synod recommitted the United Church of Christ to the principle that nations should be directed to meet the basic needs of all people for food and clean water, adequate health care, decent housing, meaningful employment, and basic education. The Fifth, Seventh, Ninth, Tenth and Thirteenth General Synods affirmed policies for children concerning education, health, nutrition, and financial support.

Children in the United States are becoming poor at an alarming rate. In 1985, over thirteen million children were living in poverty, 3.6 million more than in 1970, even though the total number of children in the United States declined during that period. Approximately one third of all children born in the United States in the 1980s' will spend at least part of their childhood in poverty if current rates do not change. Children who live in poorer nations have even bleaker prospects.

There are two basic reasons why children in the United States have fared poorly in the 1970s' and terribly in the 1980s': First, children share in the general increase in poverty, an increase largely due to the poor functioning of the economy for lower-income citizens. The average income of the poorest 40 percent of U.S. families has declined \$470.00 per year in constant dollars since 1980, while that of the richest ten percent has increased by \$5,000.

Second, federal subsidies and programs affecting children have also been reduced. In 1979 government benefits lifted 37 percent of all poor people to an income level equal to the federally-defined poverty line. By 1984 such benefits lifted only 18 percent to the poverty line. The value of benefits available through Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the major cash benefit program to poor families with children, has fallen by 34 percent against inflation since 1970. To make matters worse, the proportion of poor children being served through AFDC has fallen sharply. Over 80 percent of poor children received AFDC benefits in 1973, while less than 60 percent do so today. Programs serving the educational, nutritional, and health needs of children also have been cut or restricted.

This Pronouncement and the accompanying Proposal for Action, are based on responses of previous General Synods, as noted above, and extends those concerns to address the needs of children. The Pronouncement flows from a celebration of children in and for themselves and a thankfulness for their participation in families, churches, communities, and societies. It is also a statement of hope for our future and a statement of our stewardship for future generations of the resources which have been entrusted to us.

#### Biblical, Theological and Ethical Rationale

In Isaiah 44:3-4, God reaffirms the covenant with the people of Israel and gives special attention to the inclusion of children in the covenant:

"I will pour down rain on a thirsty land, showers on the dry ground. I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessings on your children. They shall spring up like a green tamarisk, like poplars by a flowing stream."

The promise of God's blessings for children has been affirmed down the generations of faith from the time that God first promised to Abraham and Sara that their offspring would be as numerous as the stars. Jesus repeated the theme that God offers abundance to all who enter the eternal realm by likening the eternal realm to a banquet set for everyone. Then Jesus identified this precious invitation as directed to those who enter as children. Children are not only specifically invited, they show us the way. When we baptize children in the church, we are reminded that communities of faith take responsibility for their children, and that children are direct participants in God's hopes and plans. As children grow, there comes a time when the church invites them to sit at the feast of God's presence, the service of holy communion. The closing vision of "Revelations" repeats the vision of creation and reminds us that from the beginning of scripture to its end, God calls us to a bountiful covenant.

We affirm our call to be co-creators with God of a society and a world in which there are enough resources for all. We affirm the cry of justice that insists that everyone have a sufficient share of material resources for sustenance and personal development. We proclaim that all people should have the opportunity to participate fully in their communities. Such affirmations have led the United Church of Christ in its historic work to end poverty. Within this heightened awareness we affirm the importance of children in and of themselves and of the importance of investing in our children as a means of shaping a positive future for us all. It is an act of stewardship of the resources which have been given to the world by God, and developed by previous generations, to consider the coming generations as we shape our religious, social, economic, and political life. We must continue the work of generating abundance within the larger perspective of living in covenant with God. Let us take up the Great Commission to the church with joy: to invite everyone, specifically including all children, to the table set by God.

#### Statement of Christian Conviction

The Sixteenth General Synod affirms that the covenant of God is with all children of our nation and world. The United Church of Christ shares additional covenantal responsibilities with the children who share our church life.

Children have the right to develop spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and culturally, and to live in conditions of freedom and dignity.

Children have the right to growth and development. To that end, children have the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation, and medical services, including appropriate pre- and post-natal care for themselves and their mothers. Investments in children are investments in the prevention and ending of poverty, and in the wholeness, vitality, and security of all nations.

Children who have physical, mental, emotional, or social disabilities have the right to education, treatment, and care appropriate to their conditions.

Children have the right to love and understanding and the right to full participation in their families and societies. Both families and societies must do their parts if children are to have optimum opportunities to live and to grow. Each must work to provide opportunities and engage the contributions of children. Each must correct the other when harm is being done to children. Whenever possible, children should be in the care and under the responsibility of their parents, but public authorities have the duty to support and provide proper care for children who are without a family.

Children have the right to be protected against all forms of cruelty, neglect, and exploitation.

Children should not be admitted to employment before an appropriate age, nor should they be permitted to engage in an occupation or employment which would threaten or restrict their health and education or interfere with their physical, mental, or moral development.

Children have the right to free public education. It is the responsibility of society to see that all children receive a good education, one which equips them fully for our complex world.

Children have the right to opportunities for play, recreation, and laughter.

Children should be raised and educated to develop pride in their own cultures and to respect the cultures of others, to seek a world in which relationships are based on friendship and justice, and to dedicate themselves to work which will make their societies, nation, and world a better place for all.

## 5. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION "EMPOWERING AND SUSTAINING CHILDREN"

Ms. Lyons presented the Proposal for Action "Empowering and Sustaining Children." After the vote the motion carried.

87-GS-64 VOTED: The General Synod adopts the Proposal for Action "Empowering and Sustaining Children."

### Proposal for Action Empowering And Sustaining Children

#### Summary

This Proposal for Action assumes that we should celebrate and sustain children for themselves and that we should also empower them to participate in and contribute to the families, communities, and the world in which they live.

#### Directional Statement

The Sixteenth General Synod calls upon the United Church of Christ to love and serve the children of our nation, our world, and of our own communion, as a thankful response to the covenant God has made with us and extended to us down through the generations.

#### Call to the Churches

The Sixteenth General Synod calls on our churches to include children in the life of the congregation and to serve the children in the communities where they live. Such activity should have at least seven components:

1. Affirming that parents have the primary responsibility for providing for the well-being of their children, congregations should assist parents in this effort by providing support, parent education and counseling.
2. Ample opportunity should be given to children to share in the central worship life of the congregation, and attention should be given to their full inclusion in the koinonia of the congregation. Children are not merely to be served by the congregation; they are fully a part of the congregation.
3. Adequate provision should be made for the Christian education of children at each stage of their development within the life of the congregation. This should include the recruitment and training of teachers and leaders and the provision of proper materials and experiences. Congregations should also reflect on how the whole of their common lives affects their children.
4. Children should be included in the mission life of the congregations in appropriate ways.
5. As congregations consider and shape their mission, they

should respond to the concerns of children, with special attention to those children who are in greatest need, as an important option for local service. In addition to direct services, church leaders should consider the prophetic role of advocacy for children in their communities, their schools, and their health and legal systems.

6. Children facing terminal illness have the right to the dignity of health and hospice care, spiritual support and counseling for themselves and their families. Churches are particularly commended to give attention to the needs of children facing terminal illness and to families suffering from the death of a child.
7. Congregations should support those UCC related institutions which serve children, with volunteers, financial aid and guidance. The Sixteenth General Synod also calls on churches to support the work of associations, conferences, and instrumentalities as they take on the work of serving children in wider contexts, including advocacy at local, state, and national levels.

The Sixteenth General Synod also calls on churches to support the call of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. for the National Children's March for Survival to be held in June, 1988.

#### Call to the Conferences and National Bodies

The Sixteenth General Synod calls upon conferences and national bodies to help congregations to fulfill their celebration with, and service to, children. We also call upon conferences to serve as advocates for children within the states they serve and to work in collaboration with national bodies to develop effective programs and national advocacy. We also call upon conferences to give proper direction and support to United Church of Christ institutions which serve children.

The Sixteenth General Synod calls upon all conferences and national bodies to give fresh consideration as to how their work affects the lives of children. In particular we call upon all national bodies to reflect on whether their educational efforts and their programs recognize the importance of children and support parents in caring for and providing for their children.

The Sixteenth General Synod calls upon all church bodies to provide child care for all conferences and meetings, when needed.

The Sixteenth General Synod calls upon all church bodies to recognize and provide for the needs of staff who are also parents.

The Sixteenth General Synod calls upon all national bodies sharing in advocacy work, and particularly the Office for Church in Society and the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, to work within the following policy directives:

#### Public Policy

1. Children have the right to be part of families which have access to employment which provides income and benefits adequate to meet the basic needs of all family members.
2. When a family is unable to meet the basic needs of all family members, the society has the responsibility to provide for such basic needs. In the United States, the primary concern for providing cash benefits for families with children of poverty, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), deserves general support. To better serve the needs of children of poverty and their families the following improvements in AFDC are needed: