

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:

- a. establishment of an adequate minimum national benefit;
- b. the indexing of benefit levels to inflation;
- c. the extension of benefit levels to two-parent families in all states when both parents are unemployed;
- d. the expansion of eligibility limits, particularly in the most restrictive states, so that more children of poverty are served.

One alternative to AFDC which deserves serious consideration would be the provision of a Child Allowance. In other countries the national government provides direct payments to families to support children. In the United States some support for children is provided through the standard deduction in income taxes and the Earned Income Tax Credit to offset Social Security Taxes. Additional improvement might be sought through the tax code or in direct payments and might be provided for all children or targeted to lower income children.

3. Children have the right to live in societies which recognize their dignity and their worth, societies which shape the rules of work and other social functions in ways which encourage parents to raise children in positive and healthy ways. In particular, provision should be made for protected parental leave from work when a child is born or adopted into a family.
4. International agencies, such as UNICEF, deserve support for programs such as hunger relief, immunization programs, and oral rehydration therapy which support children worldwide. Additional attention should be given to ameliorating the problems of children as victims, as fighters, and as refugees of armed conflict.
5. U.S. foreign aid programs which have a demonstrated record, or high potential, for serving the basic human needs of all people deserve support.
6. Children have the right to a high-quality public education, in which all children should be enabled to participate. The federal government has a responsibility to redress educational inequities among the states and should focus such efforts first on the needs of low income people. Federal programs deserving support include: compensatory education under Chapter One of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, school-based efforts to recover school drop outs, child development programs for preschool children, and follow-up programs to support the gains made by children in Head Start or other enrichment programs. Head Start deserves support because it clearly has been shown to benefit children through their educational and work careers.
7. Children have the right to adequate child care whether with family members or through appropriate child care homes or centers. The federal government has an important role to play in stimulating and supporting quality child care programs which give equal access to children of poverty through appropriate subsidies. To better serve the needs of all children and their families the following improvements should be made: facilities should be upgraded to provide safe and stimulating environments for children; child care workers should be appropriately trained and should have adequate pay and benefits provided; states and localities should adopt and implement appropriate child care regulations; and support should be provided for registration and referral systems. One proposal meriting support would be to link family day care homes with day care centers for training and service.
8. Children have the right to adequate nutrition, including pre-natal nutrition. The federal government has the responsibility to ensure that the need of all children for adequate nutrition is satisfied. Federal nutrition programs

deserving support include the Supplemental Feeding Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and school and day care feeding programs targeted to children who otherwise would not receive adequate nutrition. The Food Stamp Program is an important and valuable federal program which supports the nutritional needs of children of poverty.

9. Children have the right to adequate health care. The federal government has the responsibility to guarantee that such care is available to all children. Medicaid should be expanded to serve all children of poverty. Community health centers and other means for serving the health needs of children deserve support.
10. Older children have the right to education and training programs which fit their needs even when they are school drop-outs. Current federal programs which serve this need and deserve support include the Job Corps, Summer Youth and Employment Programs, and the Jobs Training Partnership Act.
11. Children have the right to be recognized as important in and of themselves and not just for contributions they may make to their families and their society while children or later as adults. Older children may take on work obligations, but such obligations must be non-exploitative and must protect the child's health and opportunities for growth and development.
12. Children with special needs, including children with handicapping conditions, have a right to appropriate quality special services. The federal and state governments have an appropriate role to play in stimulating and providing such services, including foster care and adoption services, abuse and neglect services, counselling to deal with emotional and other problems, services and programs to help children to reach their highest potentials, and services to runaway or throwaway youth.
13. Children have a right to live in adequate housing. Low-income housing programs should be planned to include the needs of children.
14. Children have the right to spiritual development and our society must support religious freedom as the proper context for such development. Responsibility for a child's spiritual development should be specifically reserved to families. It is in the common interest of children, families, and societies to encourage positive images and role models and to discourage negative images such as those of sexual exploitation or drug dependency.
15. Children have the right to learn about and celebrate their own and others' cultural roots. American society is strengthened by contributions from many cultures, and children should be encouraged to learn about and appreciate diverse cultural heritages.
16. Children have the right to recreation and play because it is important in and of itself as well as for the growth and development of the child.

6. REAFFIRMING PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION BETWEEN UCC IN PHILIPPINES AND UCC IN USA

Mr. Norman Van Klompenburg, Chairperson of the Executive Council, presented an Executive Council recommendation on the Philippines, found in Advance Materials II, page 168, noting the long standing relationship between the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and the United Church of Christ in the USA and its predecessor bodies. This recommendation reaffirms the partnership in mission. The adoption of the Resolution was moved.

87-GS-65 VOTED: The Sixteenth General Synod reaffirms the