

image, in love of neighbor and through the active pursuit of justice; and

WHEREAS, General Synod Ten voted its support for the "enactment of legislation at the federal, state, and local levels of government that would guarantee the liberties of all persons without discrimination related to affectional or sexual preference;" and

WHEREAS, General Synod Eleven urged "congregations, associations, conferences and instrumentalities to work for the decriminalization of private sexual acts between consenting adults;" and

WHEREAS, the sexual expression of many disabled persons is criminalized by the so-called "sodomy laws;" and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court on June 30, 1986 ruled to deny the right of privacy and stated that the Constitution does not protect sexual relations between consenting adults in the privacy of their own homes, thereby intruding on the privacy of heterosexuals and homosexuals alike; and

WHEREAS, the Court's majority opinion claiming there is "no connection between family, marriage, or procreation on the one hand and homosexual activity on the other" clearly denies the family life of gay and lesbian people; and

WHEREAS, Justice Harry Blackman in his minority opinion notes "the Court's almost obsessive focus on homosexual activity" while "the fact that individuals define themselves in a significant way through their intimate sexual relationships with others suggests, in a nation as diverse as ours that there may be many 'right' ways of conducting those relationships;" and

WHEREAS, the majority opinion equates private, consenting adult homosexual conduct with "incest and other sexual crimes" not taking into account expressions of love and intimacy in gay and lesbian relationships; and

WHEREAS, history demonstrates that obsessive fear and violence is encouraged by such thinking;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Sixteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ reaffirms the actions of past General Synods supporting the human rights of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Sixteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ now affirms the right to privacy, free from government intrusion, for all adults in their private, consensual, sexual relationships; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Sixteenth General Synod directs the Office of the President and the Office for Church in Society to work diligently to insure that right at the federal, state, and local levels; and

FURTHER, the Sixteenth General Synod urges individuals, congregations, associations, and conferences to work for repeal of current laws which make private consensual sexual behavior a crime, and work for enactment of legislation that guarantees the civil liberties of all persons without regard to sexual orientation; and

FURTHER, the Sixteenth General Synod urges United Church of Christ bodies meeting in states which have so-called "sodomy laws" to plan events making public witness to the church's commitment to defend the right to privacy.

No financial implications.

## 9. NEW BUSINESS INTRODUCED

Ms. Teri Henderson (MICH) asked to be permitted to introduce a new business item by title only. She presented new

business entitled, "Response to the COMADRES Invitation." The item was referred to the Business Committee.

## 10. PRONOUNCEMENT "AFFIRMING THE WHOLENESS OF THE GOSPEL: INTEGRATING EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH AND JUSTICE AND PEACE"

Rev. David E. Stephens, Chairperson of Committee 6, presented the Proposed Pronouncement "Affirming the Wholeness of the Gospel: Integrating Evangelism and Church Growth and Justice and Peace." It was moved, there was discussion and it was

87-GS-80 VOTED: The Sixteenth General Synod adopts the Pronouncement "Affirming the Wholeness of the Gospel: Integrating Evangelism and Church Growth and Justice and Peace."

### Pronouncement Affirming the Wholeness of the Gospel: Integrating Evangelism and Church Growth and Justice and Peace

#### Summary

This Pronouncement calls for the intentional integration of United Church of Christ programs in evangelism and church growth and in justice and peace. This Pronouncement does not seek to restate a theology of evangelism or of justice and peace. Rather, the focus is on the need for this integration to occur. In large measure such integration has not occurred. Connecting these two program areas of the church will give a more faithful focus for telling the Story and for building up our ministries in the world. A just peace ministry needs the ministry of evangelism and church growth, and the ministry of evangelism and church growth needs a just peace ministry for the church to proclaim both the word and deed of the Gospel.

#### Background

In the United Church of Christ we are a people who celebrate autonomy and diversity. Therefore we offer a multitude of programs to meet the needs of a large variety of people. At each General Synod we focus on certain issues by voting program priorities such as family, youth, spiritual renewal, justice and peace.

Many of us struggle to keep a creative tension of a full-orbed ministry with "one foot in piety and the other in society." The United Church of Christ has a strong program of evangelism and church growth, and we offer a multitude of programs on justice and peace-making, but have we intentionally connected these programs? We are aware that in other areas of our church's life the integration of piety and society has not been deliberate. For instance, in 1985 the General Synod voted a justice and peace priority and a spiritual renewal priority, but how intentionally integrated are these priorities?

In the midst of our autonomy and diversity, we are a denomination uniquely marked by the word and faith of covenant. Through local churches, associations, conferences and national instrumentalities, we need to affirm ways of how we belong to one another and how our programs connect and are part of a whole. The time is here to claim and declare who we are through integrating the ministries of evangelism and church growth and justice and peace. We need to embody the on-going call to be a covenanting church, with instrumentalities, conferences, associations and local churches working together in reclaiming the wholeness of the Gospel.

## Biblical and Theological Roots

The biblical story tells us that God continually gathers us into community and sends us forth into the world. Faithful disciples walk both paths.

In the Old Testament story, Israel is chosen and gathered in covenant by God to be a light to the nations. Israel is set apart to be a servant people of justice among themselves and in the world. Through Abraham's faithfulness to God's call, all the nations are blessed (Genesis 12). In giving thanks for the greatness of God, the Israelites are to tell the nations about what God has done (Psalm 105:1). The response to forgiveness of sins is being sent as God's messengers into the world (Isaiah 6:1-8). When Israel denies people justice and righteousness, then their solemn assemblies are so much noise and despised by God (Amos 5:21-24). Indeed, the Messiah who was coming would be revealed by the poor getting fair judgments, the rights of the helpless being defended and all people experiencing justice and integrity (Isaiah 11:4-6 NEB). The Old Testament makes clear that God's people "do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with (their) God" (Micah 6).

In the New Testament the word and deed of the Gospel are one. Mary affirms that the One to be born through her is of God who scatters the proud with their plans, who brings down the mighty from their thrones, who lifts up the lowly, who fills the hungry with good things and who sends the rich away with empty hands (Luke 1). Indeed, Jesus' birth fulfills the prophecy of the Magnificat - he is born of a lowly peasant woman among the Gentiles and foreigners who compose most of the population of the Province of Galilee, in the despised town of Bethlehem, in a stable outside an inn. Yet that birth is heralded as the time of "peace and goodwill" among all people. Through his baptism, he identifies with the masses of people rather than with the leaders of religious institutions - the Sadducees and Pharisees.

After the initial struggle for the identity of Jesus' ministry, he gathers with his family, neighbors and friends at the synagogue (as is his custom) to proclaim that his ministry is to bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to the captives, set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when God will save the people (Luke 4).

Regularly, Jesus goes apart for prayer and renewal. We know little about those times apart, but we know much about his ministry. He gives a sense of belonging and self-worth to the most severely oppressed people of his day - women, lepers, the poor. Outsiders and foreigners (the Syro-Phoenician woman and the Samaritan woman at the well) provide models of faith for all of Israel. People caught in a systemic perpetration of evil (tax collectors and soldiers) are drawn to Jesus. He teaches that outsiders reveal to us the will of God (the Good Samaritan). And in one of his last teachings he declares that inheriting eternal life is a gift to us as we respond to him in the least of our sisters and brothers - the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned.

Jesus dies by the decisions of religious and political leaders and the masses of people outside the city walls, on a cross between two thieves. He dies as he was born and lived - as an outsider.

The early church proclaims that to be "in Christ" means to participate in the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12) to equip people for the ministry of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:18-19). Through the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, good news is proclaimed to people from every corner of the world (Acts 2:5). Five thousand people respond, becoming charter members of the Body of Christ. Paul becomes a key leader in bringing the Good News to the outsider. He preaches in the

synagogues and marketplaces and confronts the secular philosophies and ideologies of the time. From the very beginning, the Body of Christ cares in a special way for the dispossessed - such as widows and orphans. From the very beginning, the Body of Christ grows because of the understanding that its mission is to invite the Gentile, foreigner, stranger and alien into the Christian community. From the very beginning, the Body of Christ is marked as an inclusive community made up of people bridging the chasms and breaking the barriers of life: "There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free, between men and women: you are all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28).

Thus, the Christians of the early church practice radical hospitality. They receive not just people like themselves, but also open their homes (where the church gathered) to strangers (Romans 12:13, I Timothy 5:10, Hebrews 13:11). The Gentiles, foreigners, aliens and strangers are invited in for lodging, food and the worship of Jesus Christ. This pervasive welcoming of people who were different is one of the greatest contributions the early church made to the society of the time; this radical hospitality is the chief bond that gave a growing sense of unity in church and society, and it is a main ingredient for faithful church growth in the early centuries.

Becoming "one in Christ" means not only practicing a radical hospitality but also challenging the culture and systems of society that are in conflict with the Gospel. To create the new community in Christ requires, at times, disobeying the political rulers and confronting the principalities and powers. To be "in Christ" is to participate in the formation and experience of a new creation. Christ calls us to be agents of reconciliation among nations and races, cultures and traditions.

The Christians of the early church have one foot in piety and the other in society. Being "in Christ" requires the formation of a community of faith which is radically different from the world and through which the world is radically transformed.

## Statement of Christian Conviction

The Sixteenth General Synod affirms the following:

1. Scripture calls us to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves, to make known the good news of Jesus Christ as Saviour and to witness to that news in word and deed. To witness in word without visible consequence in deed is to risk affirming a faith which is superficial. To witness in deed without sharing the word is to risk hoarding the faith we are given.
2. We are called as Christians to discipleship which involves sharing the Gospel, inviting persons into the company of Christ's people and pursuing justice and peace. There is a cost and a joy to our evangelism and discipleship. Confessing Christ as Saviour and being converted to his discipleship belong inseparably together. Without clear confession of Christ, our discipleship cannot be recognized; without costly discipleship, people will hesitate to believe our confession.
3. Strengthened in membership and faith, we are called as a covenant community to be a witness to God's love for the poor and oppressed. God is already at work in the world on behalf of them; by God's grace we are invited to join in this redeeming work.
4. We proclaim the Gospel story when we share the Good News again and again among ourselves and with others, especially the "poor, captives, blind and oppressed" (Luke 4:18-19). The ministry for justice and peace and the ministry of evangelism and church growth are not separate from each other, but in fact stand together at the center of what God calls us to do and to be.