

11. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION "AFFIRMING THE WHOLENESS OF THE GOSPEL: INTEGRATING EVANGELISM AND CHURCH GROWTH AND JUSTICE AND PEACE"

Mr. Stephens, on behalf of Committee 6, then moved the Proposal for Action "Affirming the Wholeness of the Gospel: Integrating Evangelism and Church Growth and Justice and Peace," and after discussion it was

87-GS-81 VOTED: The Sixteenth General Synod adopts the Proposal for Action "Affirming the Wholeness of the Gospel: Integrating Evangelism and Church Growth and Justice and Peace."

**Proposal for Action
Affirming the Wholeness of the Gospel:
Integrating Evangelism and Church Growth and
Justice and Peace**

Summary

This Proposal for Action, like the Pronouncement on which it is based, calls for the intentional integration of the ministries of evangelism and church growth and of justice and peace in order for the church to embody more faithfully the word and deed of the Gospel.

Background

A strong program of evangelism and church growth already has broad participation throughout the United Church of Christ. We are a leader among mainline Protestant denominations with the development of this program. At the same time, we are a leader in the struggle for justice and peace through our many and diverse policies, programs and actions. Many people in the United Church of Christ are concerned that these two areas of ministry be understood and acted upon as an integrated emphasis of being faithful to the Gospel, shaping the unfolding identity of the United Church of Christ.

Directional Statement and Goals

The Sixteenth General Synod calls upon the United Church of Christ to affirm that the ministry of inviting and assimilating new members into the life of the church and the ministry of justice and peace are both central to our identity as Christians. A need exists for more intentional connections between these two areas of leadership in ministry for the faithful development of the United Church of Christ.

Call to the Local Churches

The Sixteenth General Synod

1. Calls upon all local churches to develop mission objectives which will clarify their purpose for growing in numbers.
2. Calls upon all local churches to reclaim the word and spirit of evangelism - making known the Good News of the Gospel through the church in the world - through worship, study, training for growth and ministries of justice and peace.
3. Calls upon each local church to use updated census material in order to become knowledgeable about the community in which it is located. A vital and faithful church serves its neighborhood.
4. Calls upon all local churches to hear and feel the hurt and pain of those people who are oppressed, poor, homeless and hungry so that congregations can rediscover their identity as communities of faith called to spread the Good News of the Gospel.
5. Calls upon all local churches to participate in the Just Peace Offering and to use a portion of it locally.
6. Calls upon all local churches to reclaim, nurture and cel-

brate a ministry of the laity that focuses that ministry in the world. An intentional effort of integrating evangelism and church growth with justice and peace ministries helps laity to understand more clearly and reclaim more specifically their ministry in the world.

7. Calls upon all local churches to develop an educational ministry for all ages which focuses study, reflection and understanding on the societal and faith issues shaping our lives.
8. Calls upon all local churches to integrate evangelism and church growth and justice and peace in their worship life. Intercessory prayer leads us to encounter the world. The Sacrament of Holy Communion sends us into the world to be in service with all humanity. The gathered worship of the church needs to reflect and inspire the social witness we make in the world.
9. Calls upon all clergy through the ministry of preaching to relate Scriptural insight to human experience. We appreciate, want and need the connection between what we face day by day and what the Gospel informs us about such experience. The power of faithful preaching holds together as a whole the social and the personal, the soul and the street, numerical growth and the movement for peace and justice.
10. Calls upon all local churches to make room for and celebrate the diversity of response to the Gospel call by members. We affirm that the Spirit equips us with differing gifts, talents and abilities, enabling each of us to respond with individual acts of conscience in the service of justice and peace. Discovering these gifts and freeing us to use them is a distinguishing mark of the church.

Call to the Conferences

The Sixteenth General Synod

1. Calls upon conferences to affirm and celebrate those local churches in their midst who are growing and developing through a commitment to justice and peace.
2. Calls upon the conferences to develop visions, programs and strategies which embody the wholeness of and commitment to ministries of evangelism and church growth and justice and peace, responding both to national direction and local church experience and initiative.
3. Calls upon the conferences to be supportive of the national instrumentalities and agencies which seek to give intentional leadership to making as one the renewal of faith, church growth and justice and peace.

Call to the National Bodies

The Sixteenth General Synod

1. Calls upon the Office for Church in Society and the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to establish a working group which will give direction and guidance for carrying out the theology and convictions of the Pronouncement through the development of appropriate resources, materials and educational and training events and to oversee the implementation of this Proposal for Action.
2. Calls upon the Office for Church in Society to relate justice and peace ministries to the Gospel in which they are rooted. An essential component of training materials and events is an invitation to others to be nurtured by that Gospel.
3. Calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to include in its evangelism and church growth program resources and training which equip conferences and local churches to organize themselves in such a manner that they become effective and faithful instruments for justice and peace in the world, even as they seek to grow in

numbers of members. And we call for the setting of a goal that at least 25% of resources for new and renewing churches under the special ten-year program of church development be committed to congregations located in communities in economic crisis.

4. Calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to lead in strengthening the commitment of the United Church of Christ as a pluralistic church. The evangelism and church growth program offers us our best chance. Therefore, we call for the setting of a goal of raising our social-ethnic membership from its current 5 to 6 percent to 10 percent in the next decade. Appropriate educational and resource materials and training of laity and clergy for leadership in the urban setting and scholarships for such leadership training are needed.
5. Calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to hold a major consultation which specifically relates the development of the local church to the vision of the Gospel for justice and peace in the world.
6. Calls upon the Office for Church Life and Leadership to develop resources for planning in local churches which will intentionally call forth the churches to develop mission objectives having to do with justice and peace and to continue to develop worship resources which celebrate in Word and Sacrament our commitment to a just peace.
7. Calls upon the seminaries related to the United Church of Christ to develop courses of study which give attention to the issues and themes of this Pronouncement and equip persons for effective leadership in ministries of evangelism and church growth and justice and peace.
8. Calls upon the United Church Board for World Ministries to share stories from partner churches around the world, where growth in the spirit as well as in numbers of Christians is related to ministries of justice and peace. We must also hear when this commitment to justice and peace has led to the persecution of the church. The United States must become a mission field for these stories to be effectively told. We call upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and the Office for Church in Society to utilize these stories and learnings in their resource materials and these missionaries in their training events and programs.
9. Calls upon the Office of Communication, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the Office for Church in Society, the Office for Church Life and Leadership, the Coordinating Center for Women, the Commission for Racial Justice and the United Church Board for World Ministries to celebrate within the United Church of Christ and in the world those local churches which are embodying the oneness of evangelism and church growth and of justice and peace.

Implementation

Churches, conferences and national bodies, including the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Office for Church in Society, the Office for Church Life and Leadership, the Office of Communication, the Commission for Racial Justice and the Coordinating Center for Women are requested in this Proposal to respond in various directions. These bodies are responsible for developing those strategies and programs which will achieve the goals outlined.

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

12. RESOLUTION "THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS"

Mr. Stephens, on behalf of Committee 6, also moved the

adoption of the Resolution "The Church's Response to the Economic Crisis." He described the Resolution, then spoke to it. A proposed amendment was defeated, debate was closed and

87-GS-82 VOTED: The Sixteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "Revive Us Again: The Church's Response to the Economic Crisis."

Revive Us Again: The Church's Response to the Economic Crisis

WHEREAS, the centralization of economic resources throughout the nation, with its emphasis on short-term profit rather than sustained development, destroys community life, inflames racial discrimination and ethnic conflict, decreases the quality of public education, and fragments family life with the stresses of unemployment and dislocation; and

WHEREAS, many UCC congregations are located in communities in rural America and Appalachia beset by the specific problems of plant closings, massive job loss, destruction of neighborhoods, and the erosion of a viable tax base on the local level; and

WHEREAS, the church, with its values and faith that God's coming realm will free all people for productive lives in caring communities, is called to confront controlling institutions; and

WHEREAS, the Fifteenth General Synod adopted a ten-year United Church of Christ Church Development Program; and

WHEREAS, the guidelines and practices guiding the administration of the ten-year church development exclude the majority of United Church of Christ churches, and in particular those churches located in critical mission situations; and

WHEREAS, there is no regular source of funding for support of churches in critical mission situations;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Sixteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

- Declares its support for rural, urban and Appalachian organizations seeking to restore values of community control, affirms the dignity and self worth of all citizens and fosters the stewardship of the earth's resources;
- Encourages coalitions among groups in these and other sectors to address the issues of monopolization and community life;
- Joins with other denominations and faiths in ecumenical partnership to enlarge the base of resources for building strong community organizations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Sixteenth General Synod calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to take steps to:

- Provide training and education for church and community leaders to strengthen their mission, increase economic literacy and revitalize their communities;
- Identify and relate to the "home missionaries" in impoverished areas who aid local communities and congregations in strengthening the mission of increasing citizen participation in economic life;
- Provide funding and technical assistance where necessary to implement these efforts.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED, the Sixteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recommends that a portion of all funds from all sources designated for the ten-year church development program be allocated to projects that do not necessarily meet the existing guidelines and that are located in critical mission situations as determined by the Directors of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries.