

MONDAY AFTERNOON

moved adoption of the Resolution "Honoring the 100th Anniversary of the Deaconess Sisterhood."

Ms. Evans expressed support of the Executive Council on behalf of all the members of the United Church of Christ.

The vote was taken by a standing ovation from the delegates to honor and show appreciation to the Sisterhood on its 100th Anniversary.

89-GS-60 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Honoring the 100th Anniversary of the Deaconess Sisterhood."

HONORING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEACONESS SISTERHOOD

WHEREAS, we are called to a ministry of loving service toward others in the name of Jesus Christ, and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has a heritage of compassionate care for those in need and of training for the care-givers, a ministry particularly embodied in the Deaconess Sisterhood, and

WHEREAS, 1989 is the 100th Anniversary of the consecration of the first Deaconess Sisters with the founding of the Evangelical Deaconess Society of St. Louis, Missouri, whose members belonged to the Evangelical Synod of North America, one of the antecedent denominations of the United Church of Christ, and

WHEREAS, hundreds of Deaconess Sisters were consecrated and gave outstanding leadership as pioneer professional women of the church in hospitals, in schools of nursing and x-ray technology; in community based social service programs; in homes for children, the aged and the developmentally disabled; as parish assistants in congregations, and as missionaries in India, Honduras and Ecuador, and

WHEREAS, sixteen Deaconess Sisters now continue their witness of consecrated service in retirement, and

WHEREAS, The Historical Council gratefully acknowledges the legacy of the Deaconess Sisters whose gifts and grace have abundantly enriched the life of the whole church;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod honors and expresses appreciation to the Deaconess Sisters on this their 100th Anniversary.

17. REPORT OF COMMITTEE 22

Assistant Moderator David Gerth introduced the Rev. Barry Whitely, Chairperson of Committee 22, who presented the report of the Committee, and called attention of the delegates to the Advance Materials, III page 5.

18. RESOLUTION "THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY"

On behalf of Committee 22, Mr. Whitely moved the adoption of the Resolution "The Relationship Between the United Church of Christ and the Muslim Community." Mr. Whitely spoke to the motion.

89-GS-61 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Reso-

lution "The Relationship Between the United Church of Christ and the Muslim Community."

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Theological Rationale

God calls the people of God to be agents of reconciliation, breaking down walls of division nationally, culturally, racially and religiously (Eph.2:11-18).

Historical Background

The advent of Christianity in human history in the first century A.D. was preceded by Judaism which shares a common heritage and a context for understanding the New Testament. Islam, the third of the Abrahamic and monotheistic religions, was developed in the 7th century of the Christian era. The Old and New Testament interpretations do not require reference to Islam for Christian understanding and thus Christians have traditionally understood little of the faith and beliefs of Muslims.

Therefore, despite worship of the same God, recognition of common prophets, a shared vision of God's justice, righteousness, compassion and presence in the world, Christians and Muslims have had a history of intolerance, vilification and hostility in word and action as exemplified in the characterization and writings of theologians and scholars beginning with initial contacts in the seventh century, in wars often explained as religiously stereotyping common in the present.

Further, with the presence of growing Muslim populations and communities in the United States, American Christians have the opportunity to broaden their experience, revise attitudes and enrich theological perspectives of their faith in context of Islam and the witness of Muslims.

Summary

Faced with the recognition that history extends forward as well as backwards from the crucifixion (in the words of Pilgrim's pastor, John Robinson, "God has yet more truth and light to break forth from His word") and that Christians have often ignored and been openly hostile to the revelation of God to Muslims, we ask for open hearts and minds as we as Christians learn about and support Muslims in their faithfulness in affirming the same God and our common prophets, as we discover in Islam a perspective on our beliefs and traditions and we rejoice in sharing with Muslims a hope in the principle of justice and righteousness and a belief in the peace of submission to God.

Text of the Resolution

WHEREAS, the God we worship is the God of all creation, and

WHEREAS, we recognize that we share a common tradition of revelation through God's prophets as told in sacred scriptures, and a common belief in the compassion, justice, authority and presence of God in human life and society, and

WHEREAS, there exists a lack of understanding in our society about the Muslim community and its religion, and

WHEREAS, injustice and intolerance exist because of this lack of understanding;

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THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages members of the United Church of Christ to seek greater understanding about Islam in the society as a whole.

FURTHER, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages the Synod to support this resolution, and

1. Calls upon the Office for Church in Society, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and the United Church Board for World Ministries to give the highest reasonable support to the work of the Office of Christian-Muslim Relations of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and to urge the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. to increase its emphasis on the work of that office, and
2. Calls upon the subject instrumentalities to coordinate with other denominations and/or other groups who are presently engaged in dialogue with the Muslim community, and
3. Calls upon the subject instrumentalities to identify educational resources for use in local churches to increase understanding of the Muslim community and to foster open dialogue, and
4. Calls upon all local congregations and regional judicatories of the United Church of Christ to actively engage in dialogue with the Muslim community in order to establish relationships of trust and cooperation and to participate in joint witness against all injustice in our local communities and in the world.

19. RESOLUTION "EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHINESE PEOPLE"

On behalf of Committee 22, Mr. Whitely moved the adoption of the Resolution "Expressing Solidarity with the Chinese People." Mr. Whitely spoke to the motion.

The Moderator and the Chairperson of Committee 22, Mr. Whitely, accepted as a friendly amendment from the Rev. Charles C. Buck, Northern California Conference, the following changes. Page 8, part III of committee reports . . . third to last paragraph, . . . 3rd line . . . strike . . . "reexamine" and replace with "to review" at the end of the fourth line strike "drop" and replace with "to consider suspension of."

89-GS-62 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Expressing Solidarity with the Chinese People."

EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHINESE PEOPLE

Theological Statement

What does God require of us as God's followers? We believe God calls on us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). But how can we when we hear of innocent Chinese people being slaughtered and killed by an armed military, being executed for a dream that seeks to improve their country's government. Do we remain silent, and allow the atrocities to continue or do we walk in the ways of God as Moses said, "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of God which I command you this day, by loving God, walking in God's ways, and keeping God's commandments and God's statutes and God's ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and God will bless you. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land . . . I call heaven and earth

to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life that you and your descendants may live . . ." (Deut. 30:15-19)

Choosing life means standing up and opposing the forces which create death in the world. Choosing life means standing in solidarity with the people in China.

Background Statement

The United Church of Christ U.S.A. cherishes its 160 years of relationship with China through our mission involvement. Over the years, our missionaries have given us guidance and counsel, deriving their wisdom from the people of China. This relationship has resulted in a broadened and innovative concept of mission that takes into consideration the expectations of our ideologically different governments.

We rejoiced with the rest of the world when China's doors were re-opened enabling us to renew and strengthen our ties with Chinese people and churches. It was a time for celebration and sharing. We welcomed the Chinese scholars in our schools and their presence enriched us. Americans and others who visited China were awed and inspired by the successful harnessing of a billion people to a more productive and meaningful development. Thousands of people benefited from this face-to-face, heart-to-heart contact and exchange of views. Needless to say the government policy of allowing the Chinese to visit other places is one of the factors that gave birth to the democratic movement.

Church people have lived with and visited, taught and been taught by, touched and been touched by each other's church and culture. In this cross-cultural ministry we learned to listen and maintain a critical stance towards our own cultural presuppositions making way for new patterns of friendship, community and theology. We shared some ideas and differed on others. We were edified by these exchanges, attendance in the Chinese churches doubled. In any interaction some negative and undesirable habits can also be picked up. Some of these influences might even undermine the progress that China's leaders have worked for and won. Yet, we hope, that despite the mistakes and shortcomings, the experience has been one of joy, knowing that we are in solidarity with those who work and give their lives for justice.

Because we all are part of an interconnected web of life, we share the shock and anger of people all over the world at the spectacle of thousands of unarmed civilians killed in a crushing military crackdown on June 3, 1989. We are appalled by the totally unwarranted response of the government to student demonstrators who demanded democratic reform of the government and elimination of corruption in the government. We find the use of violence as a form of crowd control unacceptable especially when a dialogue would have placated the students. We especially mourn the loss of young lives, who are part of an ever-growing circle of people who are trying to make not only China, but the whole world, responsive to human needs. We are also concerned about the recent massive arrests of intellectuals and workers in the wake of the massacre.

Equally tragic is the outrageous cover-up that the government has launched, shamelessly denying the mass murders of its citizens and glorifying the barbaric action of the military. Instead of concentrating on solving the underlying economic, social and political problems, the leadership has focused on witch hunts and extensive persecution of the dissidents. The