

MONDAY EVENING, JULY 3

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Assistant Moderator, David Gerth, called the General Synod to order in the spirit that we are bound together as a faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

2. RESOLUTION "ENVIRONMENT, SOLID WASTE AND ECOLOGICALLY SOUND LIFESTYLE"

The Moderator introduced Mr. Alexander A. Yuille, Chairperson of Committee 14, who moved the Resolution "Environment, Solid Waste and Ecologically Sound Lifestyle."

89-GS-63 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Environment, Solid Waste and Ecologically Sound Lifestyle."

ENVIRONMENT, SOLID WASTE AND ECOLOGICALLY SOUND LIFESTYLE

Summary

A resolution calling for the Church to respond to the global environmental crisis.

Background

"We have not inherited the earth from our parents. We are borrowing it from our children." John Adams

Within one century disposable products have created a crisis which threatens life in our planet. The United States alone produces 150 million tons of waste each year. One third of this nations disposal capability will be filled within five years. Half of our country's cities will run out of landfill space by 1998, yet we continue to produce and use products which are not biodegradable.

The manufacturing processes of many disposable products involve by-products which are harmful to our environment. The manufacture of paper depletes forests and pollutes rivers and groundwater. Plastic manufacture releases gases into the atmosphere some of which destroy the protective ozone layer of our atmosphere. Both steal resources from future generations.

The United Church of Christ has traditionally published curriculum to educate children, youth and adults about faithful stewardship of the earth; e.g., *To Love the Earth*, J.E.D. Curriculum, by the Rev. Charles McCollough.

The Commission for Racial Justice has published a study linking racism and toxic waste, *Resource Guide on Hazardous Waste*, in response to the Pronouncement on Hazardous and Toxic Wastes passed by General Synod XIV.

The Office for Church in Society has acted on the General Synod XIV resolution by linking the issue of justice and peace to the ongoing concern for toxic waste from nuclear plants.

The United Church Board for World Ministries is seeking to assist nations to develop in ways which are environmentally and economically responsible.

The 17th General Synod is considering the proposed priority, Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation, sponsored worldwide by the World Council of Churches.

We believe that efforts in this regard must intensify and be-

come a high priority for the United Church of Christ if we are to be faithful stewards of God's good creation.

Theological Rationale

For the believer in the Judeo-Christian tradition, care of and concern for the environment are matters of "stewardship." The creation stories of Genesis affirm that God is the creator and the source of the universe and all life. God saw God's handiwork and called it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). God set humankind in the midst of creation providing for the needs for life and growth, and in so doing gave people a special role. There is a God-given authority over the earth bestowed upon humankind (Genesis 1:26-39). Such a position does not so much imply privilege as it does responsibility. We are called to be caretakers or stewards of the gifts of creation. As stewards we are to use and not abuse, respect the world as a sacred "trust;" and continually demonstrate gratitude for God's good gifts.

Actions which attack, show disrespect for, and do harm to the earth as God's gift show irreverence for and defiance of God the Giver. God is the creative and renewing Spirit who seeks the continuing renewal of the earth — not its destruction. God's vision of SHALOM, harmony, well-being for the earth and its creatures is disregarded when human beings selfishly use its resources in ways which serve their needs only and contribute to the erosion of the health of the eco-system. When we do damage to the environment, not only do we jeopardize the quality of life on Earth for future generations, but we fall into sin.

Faithful persons are called to affirm the good of the Creation and to work for its continuing life and renewal. Such action is not merely living faithfully, but also showing gratitude for the gifts of God. The call to faith is a call to be faithful as good stewards of God's gifts.

Scripture References: Genesis 1-2; Genesis 1:26-30; Genesis 2:15; Psalm 8; Psalm 104; Job 38-39.

Text of the Resolution

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod calls upon the United Church of Christ to adopt measures to save us from our self-destruction. The magnitude of the problem calls for a radical change in our lifestyle; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod:

1. Encourages individuals, families, churches, Conferences and national bodies to promote faithful stewardship of solid waste through prayer, worship, finances, education, and example. Further, calls for refraining from all unnecessary use of disposable products and reusing or recycling solid waste where possible.
2. Calls upon the Executive Council to direct appropriate instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ to work in consultation with environmental agencies to produce educational resources on the theology of creation, raising the need for and the means of reducing, reusing and recycling solid waste.
3. Calls upon all national bodies, conferences and congregations to engage every means at their disposal to direct local, state, and national lobbying efforts toward eliminating those attitudes and behaviors in the private and corporate sectors that encourage destructive and wasteful lifestyles.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.