

3. RESOLUTION "IN SUPPORT OF THE ECUMENICAL DECADE OF CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN"

Mr. Gerth introduced the Rev. Rosemary M. Maxey, Chairperson of Committee 13, who presented the report for that Committee. Ms. Maxey then moved that the 17th General Synod adopt the Resolution "In Support of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity With Women."

89-GS-64 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "In Support of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women."

IN SUPPORT OF THE ECUMENICAL DECADE OF CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN

WHEREAS, the church through the sacrament of baptism calls women and men to live in freedom and faith together, and

WHEREAS, women in every part of the world feel the pain of oppression and sexism and encounter many obstacles to their full participation in both church and society, we all have need to confess our complicity in perpetuating the patterns of sexism and oppression that bind us, and

WHEREAS, the World Council of Churches has declared 1988-1998 The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, and

WHEREAS, the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society at its March 1988 Annual Meeting declared its support and endorsement for the Decade because we are called to advocate in church and society for the elimination of attitudes and practices that oppress women, especially sexism, racism, ageism, classism, homophobia and actions that discriminate against the disabled, and

WHEREAS, the United Church Board for World Ministries has responded to the challenge of the WCC by action of its Corporation at its 179th Annual Meeting, November, 1988 to seek with God's help to move toward solidarity and wholeness by supporting and participating in the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, and

WHEREAS, the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society and the UCBWM join in solidarity to challenge the United Church of Christ to adopt a comprehensive resolution in support of the decade, and related plans for prayer and action in support of The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon all settings of the church, local churches, Conferences, national Instrumentalities and other bodies, seminaries and institutions:

1. To accept the goals of the Decade;
2. To develop strategies to meet the goals;
3. To evaluate present policies and programs in light of these goals:

Empower women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and their church;

Affirm the contribution of women through shared leadership and decision making in church and society, and

their contributions to theology and spirituality;

Give visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the work and struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation;

Enable the churches to free themselves from racism, sexism and classism and to give up teachings and practices that discriminate against women;

Encourage churches to take actions in solidarity with women.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

1. Requests all established and recognized Instrumentalities, Conferences and other bodies to conduct an analysis of their policies, budgets, programs and decision-making practices, and develop plans of action to make changes needed to address the goals of the Decade;
2. Recommends that all Conferences, Instrumentalities and other bodies name a Decade committee to promote the Decade and monitor the implementation of its goals;
3. Directs the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society in cooperation with the United Church Board for World Ministries to coordinate the recording of data and plans for action and report to the Nineteenth General Synod, and to identify resources and materials which reflect the purpose and goals of the Decade;
4. Encourages local churches to plan special events using materials that lift up the Decade;
5. Declares United Church of Christ Women's Week February 4-10, 1990 a week of prayer and solidarity with women;
6. Calls upon the Nineteenth General Synod to hold a mid-decade celebration and call to further commitment.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.

4. RESOLUTION "ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR WOMEN WHO ARE POOR"

Ms. Maxey then moved that the 17th General Synod adopt the Resolution "Economic Justice for Women Who Are Poor."

89-GS-65 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Economic Justice for Women Who Are Poor."

ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR WOMEN WHO ARE POOR

Background

The impoverishment of women is a global issue of immense proportions. War, famine, natural disasters and countless generations of economic, cultural, social and religious subordination of women have combined to keep most of the women of the world locked in patterns of endless poverty.

Hunger, disease, frequent child bearing, poor sanitation, lack of education, inadequate services or resources all take their toll most severely on women and their children. Our hearts are moved by the wretched state of homeless refugees who are victims of war, drought or disaster, by women and children struggling to survive in teeming, overcrowded cities or primitive bush. We often fail to recognize the relationship of the plight of women in poverty around the world to our own economic system, and we fail to recognize and understand the basic issues underlying the poverty of all women.

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Closer to home, the numbers of women and their children living in poverty has become a recognized scandal in this rich and powerful nation; in a society called by its leaders to be more compassionate, kind and gentle; in a culture rich in a heritage of mission and ministry to the poor.

Poor women live in all of our communities: young and old; often ill and uneducated; unemployed, single mothers living in crowded public housing or hidden on rural back roads. Their welfare payments may be as small as \$230 per month.

Women and children huddle homeless in train stations and doorways; welfare hotels in the midst of New York's midtown spill out hundreds of children to play on city streets. Their mothers are not homeless, but their poverty sentences them to a precarious and dangerous existence in a neighborhood where the pimp and the crack dealer are heroes.

Our large cities, small towns and local communities are filled with the elderly and aged, the large majority of whom are women. They live alone and in poverty, or are warehoused in crowded nursing homes dependent on care that can be bought with a Social Security check.

Immigrant women, migrant workers, non English speaking women - all of whom are marginalized by culture and circumstance are among the poorest women in our midst.

Mentally or physically handicapped women, some turned out after years of public or private institutional care; women with no skills or resources or family support are impoverished and hopeless.

Displaced homemakers, deserted or widowed in middle age without support or access to even minimal service are plunged into poverty at a time when no resources are available to them.

Women without resources, jobs or hope are further disadvantaged when faced with a problem pregnancy. The right of poor women to reproductive freedom must mean the freedom to choose from among the options available to all women. To exercise the right to control their reproductive lives is the foundation of personal integrity and freedom of choice for all women. When that choice is denied poor women by the denial of Medicaid funding for an abortion as one of the choices she might make, the freedom of all to choose is endangered and diminished.

Vulnerability, low self esteem, poor health and nutrition, loss of productivity and the absence of any hope or realizing the potential God intends for all of us results as poor women's hopes are diminished. Each of us is diminished and the generations to follow are endangered by the deprivation suffered by poor women and their dependent children. The common factor in all of these women's lives is economic deprivation. The roots of this deprivation are the racism and sexism that permeate our culture. It is a systemic problem.

Members of families with children make up close to one-third of America's homeless population. One in four of all pre-schoolers and one in 5 of all children are poor. In single parent families one in every two children is poor, and among the children of teen age mothers 84% are poor. 43% of all black and 37% of all Hispanic children are poor. We are first in the developed world in exporting arms, but offer no child allowances, parental leave or child care supports for working parents. Since 1980 the federal per person outlay for military

defense has increased 43% and federal programs for low income families have decreased 6%.

While the church in many places and settings is seeking to minister to women in poverty, the church is in need of reform and should be held accountable.

The capacity to challenge, inform and mobilize the Church for action on behalf of poor women is possible within present funding. The will to do so is within us. The question to be answered is

"What is the depth of our will to use our resources to end the poverty of women in our society?"

Text of Resolution

WHEREAS, we are called to greater ministry and compassion;

WHEREAS, we are called to be more effective witnesses for justice in a hurting world;

WHEREAS, we are called to listen to the cries of our sisters in poverty and join in efforts to alleviate their suffering;

WHEREAS, we are called to be advocates for those who are poor - for women, children, the elderly who live in poverty;

WHEREAS, despite the presence or possibility of programs and laws to address this concern, the capacity of our society to meet the needs of poor women has not been sufficiently challenged;

WHEREAS, the resources that might provide care and healing to build up the poor have been diverted to other uses in recent years;

WHEREAS, the elimination of national funding in the Medicaid program covering abortion has limited the reproductive choices of women in poverty;

WHEREAS, the number of poor women and children has grown at an alarming rate in recent years;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has joined with other faith communities around the world to accept the challenges to be in solidarity with women in the decade 1988-1998;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod calls upon the Church to be an advocate for poor women and children in our midst;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod calls upon all national agencies, Instrumentalities and other bodies to continue to monitor legislation, develop advocacy programs to educate and inform the Church about the issues of facing poor women, and to develop such direct services as may be appropriate;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod calls upon all members of the United Church of Christ in the Conferences, Associations and local churches to request local, state and national governments to enact or enforce legislation and programs to benefit poor women. Such programs will:

- support the creation of affordable housing, not welfare warehousing for women who are poor;

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- support efforts to pass legislation that makes quality health care available and accessible to all women and children regardless of their economic status;
- support welfare programs for poor women that are not punitive or demeaning workfare programs that deprive the poor of dignity and a livelihood;
- support efforts to pass comparable worth legislation, guaranteeing women and men equal pay for work of comparable worth, including women employed by the church;
- support legislation to provide adequate, affordable child care for families with working parents;
- support education and training programs that will be available to poor women and offer them skills that can help them rise above the poverty level;
- support the right of women to reproductive freedom, including restoration of Medicaid funding for abortions;
- support the campaign to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment;
- support legislation and programs to improve and enrich the lives of women who are disabled as well as poor;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod calls upon members in the Church to study the issues of women and poverty in a global context and to raise consciousness, educate and call others in the Church to action as an act of solidarity with their sisters around the globe.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.

5. RESOLUTION "CHILDCARE, WORKPLACE AND FAMILY LIFE"

The Moderator introduced Ms. Carol Gnewuch, Chairperson of Committee 11, who moved that the 17th General Synod adopt the Resolution "Childcare, Workplace and Family Life."

89-GS-66 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Childcare, Workplace and Family Life."

CHILDCARE, WORKPLACE AND FAMILY LIFE

WHEREAS, scripture reminds us that we are all children of God and heirs to the promise of God, and

WHEREAS, the words of Jesus call us to "See that you do not despise one of these little ones . . ." (Matthew 18:10) and Jesus identified a child as the greatest in the realm of heaven, and taught his followers to receive children, for "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in me to stumble, better . . . to be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:5-6), and

WHEREAS, historically, people of faith have responded to that call by caring for children in church-housed and church-sponsored child care centers, group homes and hospitals in addition to traditional Christian education programs, and

WHEREAS, churches are the largest aggregate providers of child care in the United States, with one church in three the

home of a weekday program, studies show that for every child in Sunday School, eight children are enrolled in the church-housed day care program. And in Connecticut, for example, 110 or 23 percent of all church-housed licensed child care programs are located in United Church of Christ buildings, and

WHEREAS, national, state and local studies confirm that the number of children needing care continues to rise dramatically as economic need, changes in family structure and other factors increase the number of working parents, and

WHEREAS, delegates to General Synod XIII, in approving the Family Life Priority, urged that the "social, economic and political conditions which create family stress be analyzed and addressed," and that all parts of the Church be enlisted as "witnesses for Christ and humanity . . . that all families be ministered to creatively;"

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ stands with and seeks to protect the children of our country by encouraging public policy and workplace changes such as flexible medical and parental leave benefits, time- and job-sharing and other responses which improve the quality of life for children and their families including children with special needs, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod affirms quality child care and encourages churches, Conferences, appropriate offices and Instrumentalities to initiate and expand child care programs and increase support for child welfare advocacy efforts throughout the church by:

1. Encouraging local churches to develop and/or expand quality programs appropriate to their community needs and to support their members in seeking workplace changes that have a positive effect on family life, and
2. Urging Conferences to develop strategies to support churches in their work, fostering ecumenical and interfaith partnerships aimed at strengthening our witness and response to the problems facing children and their families, and
3. Requesting the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to develop resources and strategies that will encourage, support, and enable churches, Associations, and Conferences to expand their involvement in child care and other family life issues, and
4. Calling upon members of our church family who are policy makers in corporate, business and public sectors to be sensitive to changing family patterns and the flexible responses they require, and
5. Urging the Office for Church in Society to continue to support legislation that will increase the availability of quality child care and inform our child advocacy networks of the status of such legislation, and also to encourage the reintroduction of legislation such as the Family Leave Act, and
6. Calling upon the Coordinating Center for Women and the Commission for Racial Justice to increase their networks' involvement in advocacy for quality child care and affirmative workplace changes, and
7. Supporting individuals and congregations currently offering child care programs and urging churches to consider expanding preschool programs into full-time child development centers, and
8. Calling upon future meetings of Synod, national gatherings of the Church, Conference annual meetings and association meetings to provide adequate, on-site complimentary child care.