

TUESDAY MORNING

Recognized Group requested a point of personal privilege, in which she expressed that she was very happy to see this moment. She called attention to the fact that members of the Pacific Asian and American Ministries Recognized Group had gathered to express their support of the Proposed Pronouncement and Proposal for Action and joined her in expressing appreciation. She also wanted to assure the Synod that a committee had been appointed that would provide a report to Executive Council in the fall.

17. RESOLUTION "REAFFIRMING SOLIDARITY WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES"

Mr. Cope moved the adoption of the Resolution "Reaffirming Solidarity with our Brothers and Sisters in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines." There was no discussion and

89-GS-85 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Reaffirming Solidarity with Our Brothers and Sisters in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines."

REAFFIRMING SOLIDARITY WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, many members and leaders of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines have courageously and consistently spoken out on issues of peace, justice and human rights in the Philippines, basing their works and actions on their understanding of the Christian faith;

WHEREAS, because those words and actions, on behalf of all Filipinos, by some members of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, have resulted in the Church being labeled as a "communist front" organization and many members as "communist" by some within the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and although that accusation was denied by then Armed Forces Chief of Staff, General Fidel Ramos (himself a member of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines);

WHEREAS, the prophetic statements and activities of some members of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, as well as those of other Protestant and Roman Catholic Church members have led many to become targets of arrest, torture and assassination;

WHEREAS, within the past few months, at least eight pastors and lay leaders of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines have been killed (including the Rev. Vizminda Gran and her husband Lovino on May 1, 1989) by persons identified or suspected to be with the military or paramilitary forces of the Philippines;

WHEREAS, a recent press statement from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) reports that on Sunday, June 25, 1989, in the village of Rano in Mindanao, 39 church members were massacred while worshipping. A Washington Post article reporting on the same incident includes in the carnage a one-year-old baby and describes three of the victims as having been beheaded, including the lay pastor who had been conducting the service;

WHEREAS, concern continues to be expressed for the safety of other religious workers in the Philippines who continue to speakout on issues of peace, justice and human rights in their country, and

WHEREAS, General Synod XVI of the United Church of Christ/USA reaffirmed its solidarity and partnership with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and to the Filipino people in their continuing efforts toward peace and justice in the Philippines.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ, meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, June 28, 1989 to July 4, 1989, declares its deep distress and indignation at the escalating violence against the peoples of the Philippines who witness for justice and human rights, and declare again our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod requests that this Resolution be sent to President Corazon Aquino, Minister of Defense General Fidel Ramos, the Philippines Ambassador to the United States, and the Secretary General of the United Nations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod requests that this Resolution be sent to President George Bush, Secretary of State James Baker, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, expressing our deep concern over the ever-increasing level of U.S. military support for the Philippine Government;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod requests the Office for Church in Society to monitor the levels of military support of the Philippine government and report regularly through United Church of Christ publications;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod urges the National Council of Churches USA and partner denominations in the National Council of Churches to join us in this Resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod requests that this Resolution of Solidarity be sent to Bishop Erme Camba, General Secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and through him to all Filipinos struggling for justice and peace in the Philippines, pledging our continued support in ways possible and helpful.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.

18. APPRECIATION EXPRESSED ON BEHALF OF THE PERSECUTED

The Rev. Rosalina Villalba, the mother of a persecuted man, stood up to thank the church for this vote, on behalf of her son.

19. RESOLUTION "HAWAII HOME LANDS"

Mr. Cope then moved the adoption of the Resolution "Hawaii Home Lands." He spoke to this resolution and

89-GS-86 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Hawaii Home Lands."

HAWAII HOME LANDS

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ seeks to be faithful to the Biblical vision of the Kingdom of God;

WHEREAS, the Kingdom of God is about justice and peace and wholeness and harmony for all persons and all creation;

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WHEREAS, the United States Congress enacted the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 on July 9, 1921, establishing a homesteading program for Native Hawaiians;

WHEREAS, the Hawaiian Homes Commission act of 1920 set aside approximately 203,500 acres of land within the State of Hawaii for residential, agricultural and pastoral uses for Native Hawaiians;

WHEREAS, the Federal-State Task Force on the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 issued a Report to the United States Secretary of the Interior in August, 1983, which indicated the following:

1. That the United States and the State of Hawaii have obligations to superintend the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920;
2. That Congress should enact legislation granting beneficiaries the right to sue for breach of trust in Federal Court;
3. That 1,356 acres of Hawaiian Home Lands at Lualualei, Oahu were illegally removed by Executive Order for military use;
4. That the United States and the State of Hawaii have contributed to the misuse of Hawaiian Home Lands and have received the beneficial use and enjoyment of these lands in violation of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920;
5. That the United States military utilizes Hawaiian Home Lands at Kamaoa-Pu'ueo, Humu'ula, Kekaha, and Nanakuli, which uses should be rescinded;

WHEREAS, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands Annual Report 1988 indicates that there were 17,643 Native Hawaiian families waiting for homestead awards as of June 1988;

WHEREAS, the United States Congress and its Agencies have not taken action to allow Native beneficiaries the right to sue in Federal Court, or to rescind the illegal military uses and taking of Hawaiian Home Lands; and to return these lands to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands for the homesteading of Native Hawaiians.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ, meeting in Fort Worth, Texas on June 28, 1989 to July 4, 1989, supports the rightful claim of the Native Hawaiians to the lands set aside by the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 establishing the homestead program for Native Hawaiians, and therefore urges the United States Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, chaired by Senator Daniel Inouye, to sponsor legislation to insure the following:

1. The prompt return of all Hawaiian Home Lands currently utilized by Federal agencies for military or other uses;
2. Just land rental payments to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands for continued use of the lands until such a return is accomplished;
3. The enactment of Federal legislation allowing Native Hawaiians access to the Federal District Court for protection of the Native Trust Entitlement including Hawaiian Home Lands and ceded Lands;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod urges Delegates to the 17th General Synod, Conferences, Associations and Members of Local Churches to communicate the intent of this Resolution to their Federal Legislators before the end of August 1989;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod requests the Commission for Racial Justice, in collaboration with the Hawaii Conference, to monitor this legislation and keep the church informed.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.

20. UNITING THE COMMUNITY

The Rev. Patricia deJong thanked the Synod for their responsive participation in the various activities she had led. She then helped the community to celebrate the 4th of July.

21. RESOLUTION "SUPPORTING AMERICA SOSA OF COMADRES"

Ms. Liane Wong, on behalf of Committee 20, moved the adoption of the Resolution "Supporting America Sosa of COMRADES" with the following correction: in the second paragraph under Theological Rationale the second sentence should read "The ministry of Jesus, centered on the poor and the oppressed." After short discussion, it was

89-GS-87 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Supporting America Sosa of COMRADES."

SUPPORTING AMERICA SOSA OF COMADRES

Summary

America Sosa, the United States Representative of COMADRES (Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared and Assassinated of El Salvador) was arrested by two agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service on March 28, 1989 in First Congregational United Church of Christ of Washington, D.C. while in sanctuary with Dumbarton United Methodist Church. She has been charged with illegal entry into the United States and a deportation hearing is scheduled for August 1989.

This resolution declares support for America Sosa, for her defense against deportation, and for her application for political asylum. It calls upon the Attorney General and the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to apply the Refugee Act of 1980 to refugees from El Salvador. And, it protests the entry without warrant into a church for the purpose of arresting America Sosa.

Background

America Sosa entered the United States in 1985 with purpose and without documents. Her purpose was to serve as the United States Representative for COMADRES, the organization of El Salvadoran mothers formed at the suggestion of Archbishop Oscar Romero. To best represent the plight of these mothers, America Sosa chose to come to Washington, D.C. and enter sanctuary in Dumbarton United Methodist church, and later accepted office space donated by First Congregational United Church of Christ. Following her well-publicized arrival, she has spoken publicly for the last four years across the nation, including at the last General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

An element in achieving political asylum in the United States is demonstrating imminent peril to her life in El Salvador. Her story is thus relevant background for the case, and it qualifies her as a representative not only of COMADRES, but also of El Salvadorans more generally both in El Salvador and in this country.