

Requests that the appropriate division of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice in cooperation with the National Council of Churches Racial Justice Working Group and the Ministry to Prisoners of Conscience actively develop and disseminate information on the plight of Prisoners of Conscience which can fight discrimination towards these prisoners;

Calls upon the United Church of Christ Office for Church in Society in cooperation with the Ministry to Prisoners of Conscience and United Church of Christ United Nations observers to actively participate in the lobbying efforts of the United Nations Human Rights Campaign which through its attention to prisoners of conscience can bring about change in their present discriminatory treatment, and

Calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to coordinate the efforts of the Commission for Racial Justice, Coordinating Center for Women, Office for Church in Society and the appropriate divisions of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries as advocates for this ministry to prisoners of conscience and to report annually to the Executive Council on the progress and needs of this ministry. This is to be financed through existing available resources in the budgets of the above named instrumentalities.

24. RESOLUTION "THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR REFUGEES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA"

Ms. Wong moved the adoption of the Resolution "Protection of Human Rights for Refugees in Southeast Asia." A friendly amendment was made to add to the last paragraph "... but that the United States Government will not provide covert military aid to any of these Southeast Asia countries." This amendment was accepted and it was

89-GS-90 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Protection of Human Rights for Refugees in Southeast Asia," as amended.

PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF REFUGEES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

WHEREAS, refugees from Cambodia/Kampuchea, Vietnam and Laos continue to flee deprivation, human rights abuses, civil war, violence and famine, and are crowded in refugee camps particularly on the Thai border and in Hong Kong;

WHEREAS, as of May 31, 1989 there were 83,296 Vietnamese boat people in camps and centers in East and Southeast Asia, the highest number since 1979. In addition, 75,100 Laotian refugees remained in camps in northern Thailand, as well as an estimated 350,000 Cambodians/Kampuchean;

WHEREAS, in the last two years countries of first asylum in Southeast Asia have become increasingly intolerant of new arrivals; resettlement countries outside the region, including the United States, have diminished in their commitment to resettle refugees; and as a result refugees have increasingly suffered abuses of their human rights as evidenced by the increased savage attacks on boat people by pirates, a weakening of efforts by governments to protect them and the push-backs of refugees from coming ashore which have resulted in the deaths of refugee men, women and children;

WHEREAS, thousands of Cambodian Kampuchean refugees are held in camps along the Thai-Cambodian border to which

the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has no access to extend a protection mandate, camps where refugees suffer harassment, abuse, malnutrition and mental illness;

WHEREAS, 700 Cambodian Kampuchean refugees recently escaped during a shelling from a Khmer Rouge camp and were threatened by the Thai government with being returned to the same camp; the refugees asked for the right of freedom of association, in effect, the right to disassociate themselves with the Khmer Rouge;

WHEREAS, the exodus of the boat people from Vietnam is increasing, host countries are increasingly encouraging the use of forced repatriation, and western countries have failed to resettle them, and the principle of first asylum in Southeast Asia is threatened;

WHEREAS, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and all who dwell therein; and that Jesus Christ proclaimed, I came that all might have life and have it abundantly; and that by welcoming the stranger we also welcome him;

WHEREAS, we seek to listen and support the concerns of our partner churches overseas;

WHEREAS, we seek to hold to the international conventions to which the United States is signatory, that our nation too must be held accountable for upholding;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod affirms:

1. The right of a person to leave and to return to one's homeland and to seek asylum elsewhere be affirmed as a universal principle of refugee protection which must be vigorously defended, based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articles 13 and 14;
2. The screening procedures for determining the refugee status of individuals should be fair, just and expedient; those who are determined to be refugees should be resettled and not left waiting indefinitely in refugee camps; those screened out should have access to an appeals process and legal counsel; governmental officials with the authority to determine status be separate from any enforcement agency;
3. Increased resettlement opportunities for Southeast Asian refugees should be ensured by Western countries, and the United States especially should contribute to a comprehensive solution for the humanitarian problems in Southeast Asia; our commitment should be generous, and of unlimited duration;
4. Internationally accepted safeguards should be established to protect the human rights of those returning to their homeland; and the voluntary nature of repatriation be affirmed;
5. The Orderly Departure Program agreed upon between the United States government and Vietnam should be strengthened and expanded to minimize the need for clandestine and dangerous departures by boat from Vietnam;
6. Camps located in places where lives are threatened should be transferred to locations of peace and security; camps with inadequate shelter, clothing, sanitation, or food should be improved and social services be provided to elderly, unaccompanied minors, mothers, single parents and disabled;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the 17th General Synod affirms that those Refugees in camps along the Thai/Cambodian Border should have the right to freedom of political association.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod prays for the peace, stability and economic revitalization of Laos, Cambodia/Kampuchea, and Vietnam; and the General Synod requests the UCBWM and OCIS to seek the cooperation of the Conferences in acquainting congregations with the problems of refugees; and calls upon United Church of Christ churches to renew their commitment to refugee sponsorship through UCBWM and the Church World Service;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod requests the President of the United Church of Christ to urge the U.S. Government to play an active and constructive role to establish lasting peace and stability in Cambodia/Kampuchea so that Cambodians/Kampuchians outside their country can return home, but that the U.S. Government will not provide covert military aid to any of these Southeast Asian countries.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.

25. JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Ms. Jacqueline Smith (WIS) requested a Point of Personal Privilege and moved that "The 17th General Synod expresses gratitude for the United Church of Christ Study and action on 'Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation' and commends the study and action to the local churches, associations and conferences for thoughtful consideration." Two people spoke in favor of this, and

89-GS-91 VOTED: The 17th General Synod expresses gratitude for the United Church of Christ Study and action on "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation" and commends the study and action to the local churches, associations and conferences for thoughtful consideration.

26. RESOLUTION "INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE"

Mr. Art Wille presented the work of Committee Three, and presented the Resolution "Inclusive Language." He directed the attention to the original texts, and then to the new resolution in Part Seven of the Committee Reports. He asked delegates to make some changes in the text, then he moved the adoption of the resolution as amended.

Ms. Marilyn Breitling, Executive Director of the Coordinating Center for Women, and Ms. Barbara Weller of the Biblical Witness Fellowship both spoke in favor of the resolution.

A friendly amendment to change "local churches" to "local congregations" in the second THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED was accepted. Another amendment to change "person of leadership" to "local church congregations" failed.

89-GS-92 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "Inclusive Language," as amended.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

WHEREAS, the use of inclusive language for God is a theological issue, important to the wholeness and well-being of the entire Church;

WHEREAS, prayerful and discerning study of God's Word is essential to the mission and integrity of the United Church of Christ;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ seeks an approach to the Scriptures that is faithful to the original texts, responsive to our traditions, to contemporary needs and to the diversity present in our life together;

WHEREAS, the rich variety of images of God in the Scriptures is a gift to the Church, entrusted to us for the articulation of our faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;

WHEREAS, past General Synods have affirmed the significance of inclusive language and the importance of genuine dialogue in which members of the Church are sensitive to one another's burdens and share a common hope, and

WHEREAS, nevertheless, the way in which inclusive language is sometimes employed or ignored in the Church gives birth to pain or a sense of loss among us,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms the importance of continuing study of inclusive language and updating of the "Inclusive Language Guidelines," marked by careful scholarship, theological vitality, and an openness to Biblical interpretation and faith language that may include new and renewed understandings of ancient texts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod invites the Office for Church Life and Leadership to guide this theological endeavor and to accept responsibility for it (in such a way that the seminaries, conferences, local congregations and instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ be asked to engage together in this vital task during the biennium 1989-91), offering a progress report to General Synod 18, and that the Office for Church Life and Leadership disseminate during the next biennium, in conversation with the seminaries, Conferences, local churches and Instrumentalities, educational resources and materials that address the hopes and promise, as well as the questions and reservations present in the midst of discussions of inclusive language and the nature of authoritative texts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod urges that, in this interim period (1989-91), all who publicly use the Bible and other selected Biblical resources identify the version of Scripture or source of quotation, and that the recognized and established instrumentalities continue to identify the version of Scripture or source of re-written or paraphrased material used in all resources and written materials.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod recognizes that the responsibility for the use of inclusive language in worship, in the writing of material for publication or other public use of the Bible continues to rest with the person in leadership.

Such responsibility includes: 1) Choosing from among existing or emerging translations by scholars from credible Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic texts, and 2) choosing from among Biblical paraphrases, lectionaries and other selected Biblical resources that identify the grace of God in relation to the realities and concerns of contemporary life.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod recognizes that genuine, open and honest discussion on important issues such as inclusive language and the Trinitarian formula involves the gift of trust and represents not a burden but an opportunity and a challenge for the Church. The 17th General Synod also urges that this task be undertaken in faith, hope,