

MONDAY AFTERNOON

justice. God's will that all creation live in right relationship, shalom, is first understood in the context of family.

In the beginning God created man and woman as companions for one another (Gen. 2:18), blessed them, and urged them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28). Jesus' ministry also evidences concern for family life. Not only did he insist that children be allowed to come into his nurturing presence (Mk 10:13-16), but he was also very compassionate to parents who were asking his healing help for their children (Mk 5:21-43; 7:24-30; 9:14-29, etc.). Certainly, Jesus had great sympathy and respect for the demanding task of parenting.

Given the fundamental importance of family life to our faith and its development, God asks us to remember this priority when we come to balance home and work responsibilities. Pastors and church employees are whole human beings with the need for time to nurture family relationships. Given the modern pressures of dual-career families, economic stress occasioned by the low average wage paid to church workers, and life in the fast lane it is not easy to honor this commitment. Furthermore, because congregations expect their pastors and staff to be exemplars of Christian behavior, they must also be willing to provide the love and support necessary to maintain healthy family lives. An essential part of this support is providing a paid leave at the time of the birth or adoption of a child for both male and female pastors and staff. God asks us to provide that nurturing context.

Rationale for Synod Action

The General Synod, as the representative body of the United Church of Christ, should be in the forefront of action for justice in the area of family life. The Synod is a teacher for the church, providing models for instrumentalities and national bodies, conferences, associations and local churches. The church should also provide models for the world of business, government and other non-profit agencies.

References to Previous General Synod Policy on this Issue

General Synod 15 voted a priority on Family Life in 1985 which led to a concern and focus on all dimensions of family life. This resolution carries on the spirit of this priority by specifying ways of supporting church employees in their family lives.

Background Discussion

With the increasing numbers of women serving as ordained ministers in pastorates in local churches, it has become apparent there is a need to include parental leave policies in all contracts. Leave time is needed for the initial parent-child bonding as well as for purposes of physical recovery. Recently, the recognition of the importance of fathering mandates the inclusion of paternal leave in this policy. Within the Hawaii Conference several clergy recognized the conference should have a policy recommending inclusion of parental leave policy in all pastoral contracts. This is important because the conference provides models for contracts when pastors are called to congregations.

Such a policy provides an opportunity for bodies in the church to take action in supporting men and women for the very special and consequential needs they have at times of birth and adoption.

At the Aha Pae'aina (Annual Meeting) 1989 of the Hawaii Conference, the Hawaii Conference Commission on Women's Concerns and a local congregation co-sponsored a conference resolution on Parental Leave Policies, the Commission on Women's Concerns is now advocating such a policy for employees of the conference.

After conversation with representatives from many conferences and instrumentality staff, it has become clear this is an issue for the whole church.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod recognizes the importance of the family responsibilities of all church employees, and commends local churches, associations, conferences and national instrumentalities that have provision for parental leave in their personnel policies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod recommends the Executive Council, instrumentalities, conferences associations and local church — all church bodies — to include appropriate terms of Parental Leave in call agreements, contracts and personnel policies for all male and female employees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod directs the Executive Council to implement research as a basis for developing guidelines, educating the whole church, and monitoring progress. Subsequently, the Executive Council should direct the appropriate instrumentality to evaluate the research, to develop appropriate guidelines, to make available educational resources to the whole church, and to monitor and report progress to the Nineteenth General Synod.

Subject to the availability of funds.

12. RESOLUTION "TOWARD A MORE JUST PENSION SYSTEM"

Following an introduction of the Resolution "Toward a More Just Pension System," Mr. Haemmelmann moved its adoption.

91-GS-35 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "Toward a More Just Pension System."

TOWARD A MORE JUST PENSION SYSTEM

WHEREAS, concern about inequitable and inadequate compensation is widespread in the United Church of Christ;

WHEREAS, a comprehensive analysis of total compensation, including salary, housing, pension and other benefits, is necessary;

WHEREAS, the issue requires theological reflection.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon the Office of Church Life and leadership to coordinate preparation of a pronouncement on "Fair and just Compensation" for ordained, licensed, commissioned and lay employees for consideration by the Nineteenth General Synod.

Subject to the availability of funds.