

MONDAY EVENING

WHEREAS, A resolution of the Sixteenth General Synod calls for renewed United States support of the United Nations as our best investment for a just peace;

WHEREAS, The United Nations is the world's best existing vehicle for coordinating the efforts of all people to:

- (a) Work toward restoring the earth and the integrity of creation,
- (b) Provide justice to all people and creatures of God's creation,
- (c) Make peace and keep peace among the nations and people of our civilization;

WHEREAS, the planet Earth will not continue to support the human species at the present rate of population growth and depletion and desecration of the biosphere;

WHEREAS, many of the goals of the United Nations parallel on these issues the priorities and spirit of the United Church of Christ; and

WHEREAS, the current crisis in the Middle East creates new urgency around the need for the leadership of the United Nations for building peace with justice and for binding up the human social and political wounds of war.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon instrumentalities such as the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the Office for Church in Society, and conferences to devote additional resources:

- (a) To re-establish the office of the United Church of Christ at the United Nations Church Center in New York City;
- (b) To provide an awareness and education to people of all ages in the United Church of Christ on how the United Nation's goals and programs parallel the United Church of Christ's priority of "Integrity of Creation, Justice, and Peace," and the Gospel's call to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, freedom to the oppressed, sustenance to the hungry and housing to the homeless;
- (c) To advocate for the United Nations by encouraging the United States to support the United Nations and lead the nations of the world in working through the United Nations as the forum for resolving world issues;
- (d) To cooperate with the United Nations and its specialized agencies in meeting the needs of all God's children for assuring the basic human rights and providing the education, health care, food and housing all God's children need for the fullness of life promised in the Gospel;
- (e) To explore the possibility of cooperating in these efforts with our partner church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod supports ratification by the United States of the International Human Rights Covenants and Conventions on:

- (a) Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has not been ratified by the United States;

- (b) Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women which has not been ratified by the United States;
- (c) Convention on the Rights of the Child which has not been ratified by the United States;
- (d) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which has not been ratified by the United States;
- (e) International Covenant and Optional Protocol on Civil and Political Rights which has not been ratified by the United States;
- (f) International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination which has not been ratified by the United States;
- (g) International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid which has not been ratified by the United States;
- (h) Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which has not been ratified by the United States;
- (i) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which has not been ratified by the United States;
- (j) We celebrate the ratification by the United States of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Subject to the availability of funds.

8. RESOLUTION "UNITED STATES' ROLE IN A NEW WORLD ORDER"

Mr. Adkins directed the delegates' attention to Committee Reports Part 3, page 3 and moved that the General Synod approve the Resolution "United States' Role in a New World Order." Ms. Lisa Slosker, a member of the committee spoke to the resolution.

91-GS-43 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "United States' Role in a New World Order."

UNITED STATES' ROLE IN A NEW WORLD ORDER

Background

The United Church of Christ has embarked on a significant journey from being a proponent of Just War theology to adopting a position on a Just Peace.

The Thirteenth General Synod defined a Just Peace "as the interrelation of friendship, justice and common security from violence". As we explore what it means to be a Just Peace Church we are further challenged by the message of the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul, Korea, sponsored by the World Council of Churches in 1989. In anticipation of the World Council of Churches meeting, General Synod 17 voted the Integrity of Creation, Justice and Peace Priority.

As the United Church of Christ evolved towards a Just Peace theology, policy and priorities have been espoused in support of peace with justice and against war. Many of these policies bring us into conflict with American cultural beliefs and the premises of United States nationalism. The World Council of Churches' message on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation particularly challenges the premises behind the role the United States has played in perpetuating an unjust world order.

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As the Cold War comes to an end, the world is entering the kind of moment that occurred after the Second World War. New possibilities exist in the world order. New patterns of behavior are required of persons and political entities.

While the United States does not hold the preeminent position it held at the end of the Second World War, it appears that it has no single challenger for global leadership. If the New World Order is to change for the better, the United States will have to take leadership within the United Nations and other multi-national structures to facilitate those changes.

The triumphant strand of the United States' policy claims victory for capitalism and materialism. This is the dominant voice in the foreign policy establishment. This segment of United States leaders would continue to use U.S. military power to preserve the control over the earth's resources enjoyed by western corporations. The injustice of the present global economic system is such that it can only be maintained by the projection of military power. The need to project U.S. military power around the world distorts the economy of the U.S.A. and depletes the resources needed to do the things that make for peace.

Another powerful strand is that of relief that the Cold War is over and an impulse to retreat into domestic problem-solving and international isolation.

These impulses will not fulfill the mandate for a Just Peace. While the weapons and militarization must be curtailed, no one who ever enters a supermarket can deny the interdependence of our world. The variety of environmental crises also remind us that even a nation as powerful as the U.S. cannot go it alone.

Among the family of nations, the United States will either take leadership for a New World Order based on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation or it will obstruct such a New World Order. The United Church of Christ must take leadership in calling the United States to new community. We must hold the powers and principalities accountable to our vision of a Just Peace.

The biblical vision of peace, shalom, is a practical and earthly vision. Peace defines the way we must live together in harmonious community each having according to his or her needs.

The Rev. Walter Brueggemann writes that in biblical faith "doing justice is the primary expectation of God." He defines justice as "to sort out what belongs to whom, and to return it to them... So the work of liberation, redemption, salvation is the work of giving things back."

Integrity of Creation requires us to take seriously the familiar refrain, "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." A Just Peace requires respect for God's Creation, the rights of all people to share in its fullness and the imperative that the fullness of the Earth be sustained.

The United States, its government, non-profit organizations, religious organizations, corporations and other institutions must be transformed. The United States must give back its disproportionate claim to the world's resources. America, in all its parts, must learn a new way to be in the world, with new values and new priorities.

Many of these values and priorities are laid out in the final document that came out of the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul. The Affirmations on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation set a standard of faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ for the modern world.

These Affirmations serve as a basis for the following resolution.

WHEREAS, we, as members of the United Church of Christ are called to be members of a Just Peace Church;

WHEREAS, Integrity of Creation, Justice and Peace is a priority of the United Church of Christ;

WHEREAS, the World Council of Churches Convocation on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation affirmed a new covenant for the ecumenical movement;

WHEREAS, the United States of America and its government, non-profit institutions, religious organizations, corporations and other institutions occupy a privileged position in world affairs;

WHEREAS, 1989 marked the end of the Cold War and the beginnings of a New World Order;

WHEREAS, a New World Order based on Integrity of Creation, Justice, Peace requires the cooperation and facilitation of the United States, its government, non-profit institutions, religious organizations, corporations and other institutions; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations and its organizations provide the mechanisms for consultation, cooperation, and distribution of humanitarian services and the communication channels for sharing the information and technology required to build a global new world order.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod:

Recognizes that if there is to be a New World Order based on Integrity of Creation, Justice and Peace, the United States its institutions must adopt a new role and posture in the world collaborating fully with the United Nations and other international organizations;

Rejects the triumphalism of United States culture and the notion that the United States' material prosperity indicates the special favor of God;

Affirms the Integrity of God's Creation;

Affirms the equal value of all races and peoples and the rights of all races and peoples to share in the bounty of the earth;

Affirms the right of all races and peoples to political, economic and cultural self-determination; insofar as that self-determination does not infringe upon the right to self-determination of other races and peoples;

Affirms that the biblical vision of shalom requires that all God's children enjoy the fruits of creation sufficient to provide for their basic needs as human persons, to feel a sense of security, to be afforded a just opportunity to be productive and to develop economically and socially;

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Affirms that the biblical vision of shalom cannot be attained through military power and weapons of mass destruction or through the threat of use of such weapons;

Affirms that the United States must not intervene unilaterally in the affairs of sovereign nations nor block any efforts in the movement towards a world of Integrity of Creation, Justice and Peace;

Affirms that the United States and its institutions must respect and conform to the principles of international law and the processes of decision-making utilized by the multilateral international institutions;

Affirms that a New World Order must be based on democratic and participatory international institutions, especially the United Nations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls:

the members of the United Church of Christ to prayerful consideration and study of this resolution and to act in their private and public lives in ways consistent with this resolution;

the United Church of Christ, its members and institutions to assert a leadership role in calling the United States, its government, non-profit organizations, religious organizations, corporations and other institutions to work for the establishment of a New World Order based on Justice, Peace and the integrity of Creation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon The President of the United Church of Christ to:

communicate this resolution to the President of the United States and to the United States Congress;

advocate public policy positions consistent with this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon the Office for Church in Society, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, and the United Church Board for World Ministries to:

also advocate public policy positions consistent with this resolution;

inform and educate the United Church of Christ by providing and identifying resources for congregations regarding the principles contained in this resolution.

Subject to the availability of funds.

9. RESOLUTION "THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIANS REGARDING HUMAN DEATH"

Mr. Andrew Jay, Chairperson of Committee 21, drew the delegates' attention to a rewritten resolution in Committee Reports Part 3, pages 19-20. He spoke of the compassion displayed in the committee. At the request of Mr. Jay, general consent of the body allowed Kyle Peterson, a visitor from Ohio, privilege to speak during the discussion.

Mr. Jay moved the adoption of the Resolution "The Rights and Responsibilities of Christians Regarding Human Death." Ms. Karie Schmidt (CO), the committee resource person, spoke to the resolution.

Kyle Peterson spoke of his experience with cancer and the way he feels regarding this issue.

There were some questions regarding the wording of the resolution and the speed with which the delegates were being asked to read and become clear about the resolutions.

91-GS-44 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "The Rights and Responsibilities of Christians Regarding Human Death".

THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIANS REGARDING HUMAN DEATH

Background

We all eventually must die. When death does come, we hope that it will be swift, that we will not experience prolonged suffering, and that our dignity will remain intact. There have always been possible circumstances involving death when these desires are not fulfilled. The concern has been intensified by recent medical advances in which medical machines can indefinitely keep people "alive" in critical care units under conditions of intense, undignified suffering. Advanced Life Support measures such as cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, mechanical ventilators, renal dialysis, cardiac, lung and bone marrow transplants, and artificial hearts are no longer futuristic treatments. It is in this context that euthanasia and suicide need to be examined.

The term euthanasia now refers both to putting to death the incurably ill and to the withdrawing or withholding of artificial means used mainly to prolong life. A related concern is suicide, the taking of one's own life, as a response to a painful, lingering death or the prospect of a debilitating or terminal disease.

Euthanasic legislation has been enacted in a number of states. There are two general kinds of legislation in effect or under consideration: validating provisions to permit instructions for terminal care, e.g. "Living Wills," and protecting the right of patients to refuse treatment. This legislation does not deal adequately with all contingencies.

Ethical and Theological Issues

More important are the ethical and theological issues. One of the underlying moral conflicts centers around the patient's desire to control what happens to his or her body and the family and health care professionals' commitment to preserve life. For example, sometimes a dying person is in continuous pain, which cannot be alleviated by medication, except in amounts which may hasten death. Furthermore, improved diet and health care, disease prevention and health precautions have extended life expectancy for many into a much longer period of advanced years of utter helplessness.

The Religious Perspective

In light of these perplexities, what is our response? Our Christian perspective is that life is a gift, sourced in God, and that Christians are called to a life of freedom and responsibility as