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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

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evidenced in the teachings and life of Christ. Our covenantal faith requires that we serve the ends of fullness of life — in body and spirit, mind and human relationships — to the extent possible. Death is an inevitable part of every life process. It is not our enemy, but a part of the life cycle which we attribute to God as Creator. This present issue is about the manner of death and attitudes toward death when there is no hope for recovery to any significant degree. We affirm individual freedom and responsibility to make choices in these matters. It is not claimed that euthanasia is the Christian position, but that the right to choose is a legitimate Christian decision. It is contended that governmental powers and entrenched custom have made life and death decisions, closing off options which more properly belong to individuals and families.

Words from the 9th General Synod of the United Church of Christ are helpful as we consider issues which have arisen since 1973:

Theology is necessarily a being theology. It intends to relate our tradition to present and changing concerns. It searches for the will of God known and to be made known to us.

The supreme value in our religious heritage is derived from God the giver of personal wholeness, freedom, integrity and dignity. When illness takes away those abilities we associate with full personhood, leaving one so impaired that what is most valuable and precious is gone, we may feel that the mere continuance of the body by machines or drugs is a violation of the person.

Text of the Resolution

WHEREAS, we live in an era of complex biomedical technologies, with various means to maintain or prolong physical life and postpone inevitable death;

WHEREAS, there are ever-increasing anxieties about a prolonged dying process with irreversible deterioration, and its potentially devastating effects on the dignity of the dying person, the emotional and physical well-being of families, as well as the responsible Christian stewardship of resources;

WHEREAS, technology advances more quickly than public policy, and public opinion is often ahead of legislative enactment;

WHEREAS, individuals have increasing responsibilities in these life and death decisions, but often lack adequate information regarding available options;

WHEREAS, life is sourced in God, and recognizing that our faith calls for commitment and work for the quality of human life with mercy, justice and truth;

WHEREAS, affirming that the gift of abundant life is more than the avoidance of death, and that over-regard for the body, without proper concern for the needs of the person or the human spirit, can become a kind of biological idolatry; we are convinced that what is required is a balanced appreciation of the whole person;

WHEREAS, General Synod 12 of the United Church of Christ has supported the legal recognition of living wills and General Synod 9 addressed the rights and responsibilities of Christians regarding human death; and

WHEREAS, we support the right and responsibility of individuals to choose their own destiny, and recognize the need for safeguards to protect persons who cannot make life and death choices for themselves.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod supports the rights of individuals, their designees and their families to make decisions regarding human death and dying.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod affirms the right of individuals to die with dignity and not have their lives unnecessarily prolonged by extraordinary measures if so chosen.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls on Christians to offer love, compassion and understanding to those who are faced with difficult life-ending decisions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon the churches to study and discuss life-ending issues with resources provided by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Office for Church in Society and the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Office for Church in Society and the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries to report to General Synod 19.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod encourages the enactment of legislation safeguarding these rights, including the rights of those who are unable to make decisions for themselves.

Subject to the availability of funds.

10. PROPOSED PRIORITIES

Ms. Jackie Smith, Chairperson of Committee One, directed the delegates' attention to the Advance Materials information regarding the proposed priorities of the United Church of Christ. The results of the committee work are found in Committee Reports, Part 5. Ms. Smith explained the two-fold task of the committee: choosing the number of priorities and which one to recommend.

Ms. Smith recommended adoption of one additional priority.

91-GS-45 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod approves the addition of one priority.

Ms. Smith explained the priority process and the difficulty in choosing between the Homeless Poor and Universal Health Care for all. Ms. Smith recommended that the General Synod extend the priority "Homeless Poor" for an additional four years. There was much discussion regarding which priority should be adopted for the next four years.

Ms. Jill Mattson (CT) called for the previous question. The Moderator explained that the decision to close debate requires a 2/3 vote.

The vote carried.