

TUESDAY MORNING

and the vision of commitment and liberation held before the church today.

We affirm the direction and power of these words from the United Church of Christ Mission Statement adopted by the Seventeenth General Synod:

“Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called and commit ourselves:

- to embody God’s love for all people;
- to praise God, confess our sins, and joyfully accept God’s forgiveness;
- to hear and give voice to Creation’s cry for justice and peace;
- to name and confront the powers of evil within us and among us;
- to repent our silence and complicity with the forces of chaos and death;
- to join oppressed and troubled people in the struggle for liberation;
- to work for justice, healing and wholeness of life.”

In keeping with the Statement, this pronouncement calls the churches, conferences, and other agencies and institutions of the United Church of Christ to exist with integrity as trustworthy settings in which the whole church responds with honesty, sensitivity, firmness and justice to occurrences of abuse to persons within our common life.

We affirm that our actions must be consistent with the nature and mission of the church. We are a community gathered in response to God’s call to justice and reconciliation, in which persons are treated with care and respect — a community where personal and institutional energies are directed toward the elimination of sexual abuse or harassment within the church and in society.

12. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION “SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE IN THE CHURCH”

The Moderator invited Mr. Robert Inglis to continue with his report. Mr. Inglis moved on behalf of his committee, the Proposal for Action “Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Church.” The Rev. Fred Wenner (CAC) moved to amend the proposal for action, and the motion prevailed.

91-GS-60 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod amends the Proposal for Action “Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Church,” by inserting a fifth item under the heading Office for Church Life and Leadership to insert after “sexual misconduct, ”and, encourage and enable church leaders to provide accused offenders with emotional and spiritual support. . . .”

Following this amendment, the Moderator called for action on the proposal for action.

91-GS-61 Voted: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Proposal for Action “Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Church, as amended.”

PROPOSAL FOR ACTION SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE IN THE CHURCH

SUMMARY

WHEREAS, the Eighteenth General Synod recognizes with appreciation the many persons and organizations within our church who have provided leadership in responding to the painful, troubling reality of sexual abuse in church and society, especially: (1) curriculum materials developed by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries; (2) resources developed by the Office of Communication for response by local churches to media inquiries about scandal; (3) special procedures for responding to allegations of pastoral misconduct developed by some seminaries and some conference and association committees on Ministry; (4) resources developed by the Office for Church Life and Leadership for assistance to conference and association staffs and committees on ministry; (5) research and consultation carried out by the Coordinating Center for Women.

WHEREAS, the Eighteenth General Synod recognizes great and pressing needs for continued response and additional action, and

WHEREAS, the Eighteenth General Synod recognizes the obligation of the church to respond to allegations of sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse with pastoral concern:

- for the victim or complainant, without regard to blame or legal consequences;
- for the clergy or lay person accused, assuring full access to due process within the framework of our polity;
- for the families of the victim and the offender;
- for the congregation and community;
- for doing justice within the framework of the Christian community.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon United Church of Christ instrumentalities and other bodies, conferences, association, seminaries, educational and health and welfare institutions to respond to sexual harassment and abuse in the following ways:

articulate in policy, educational and programmatic materials, as well as in the example set by recognized leadership, that sexual harassment and abuse and unwelcome or sexually explicit behavior in any setting of the church is unacceptable and will not be tolerated;

develop within the framework of our polity, policies which clearly articulate the issues and set forth procedures for grievance and adjudication of justice;

train staff and volunteers to avoid or eliminate those situations in which sexual harassment or abuse occur;

adopt and implement policies that assure all church employees and volunteers of a workplace free of sexual harassment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon the conferences and associations to:

develop, adopt, and periodically review guidelines for addressing sexual harassment and pastoral or professional misconduct of a sexual nature.

TUESDAY MORNING

identify and distribute guidelines for addressing sexual harassment and abuse within local congregations.

name and train conference Response Teams to include victim advocates in responding to allegations of sexual misconduct and harassment with support, education and assistance from the Office for Church Life and Leadership, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the Coordinating Center for Women and other appropriate bodies or institutions.

train interim ministers to respond with care and healing to a congregation that has gone through a situation of sexual harassment and abuse.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon local congregations, pastors and other members of the United Church of Christ, in responding to sexual abuse or harassment within the church, to:

name and confront the reality of sexual harassment and abuse within church and society, striving diligently and honestly to root out such practices wherever they exist;

within settings of worship, education, administrative and organizational life, study and discuss the issues of sexual harassment and abuse toward the goals of effective prevention and concerned, compassionate response;

encourage nurture and care of all who are victims of sexual harassment and abuse;

exercise care in the recruitment, screening and training of persons who are its called, employed or volunteer leaders;

train church school teachers, pastors, staff, and volunteers to recognize and respond to signs of sexual abuse of children;

maintain appropriate liability insurance coverage;

make widely available information about how, and to whom to report allegations of sexual harassment or abuse.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod requests:

The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to:

develop resource materials and program designs for education about sexual harassment and abuse for use in such local church settings as church school classes, fellowship groups, official committees and boards and such wider church settings as conference and association camps and assemblies;

develop resources for, and carry out in service training with Christian educators, whether staff or volunteer, including those responsible for outdoor ministries, regarding their leadership roles and responsibilities in prevention of and response to sexual harassment and abuse;

identify and develop and make available training resources that assist church school teachers in recognizing and responding to signs of child sexual abuse;

work with seminaries, colleges and community organizations to develop resources and models which address sexual

harassment and abuse in those settings;

develop an audit of national and conference resources available to local churches.

The Office for Church Life and Leadership to:

help equip association/conference staff persons and committees on ministry to respond effectively to accusations of sexual misconduct;

develop a resource which alerts persons in ministry to the issues associated with sexual misconduct within the professional relationship and their own areas of responsibility and vulnerability;

continue to work towards a reporting structure to ensure that persons who are determined unfit for ministry due to sexual misconduct are denied further access to the placement process of the United Church of Christ;

be available for consultation to conferences/associations when accusations of sexual misconduct arise;

explore the development of a resource to assist local churches in a healing process following occurrences of sexual misconduct, and encourage and enable church leaders to provide accused offenders with emotional and spiritual support within their congregation;

develop a resource for use by local churches and pastors, by committees on ministry and by seminary polity faculty and students of polity enabling review and discussion of the concepts and understandings contained in The Ordained Ministers' Code;

The Office of Communication to:

develop and make available to all settings of the church guidelines for appropriate response to the media in matters of scandal, allegations of pastoral misconduct or other charges of a serious nature.

The Office for Church in Society to:

monitor proposed legislation and regulations relating to the work place and advocate for the inclusion of sexual and domestic violence, sexual misconduct and harassment legislation at the state and national levels to protect persons who are vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse.

The Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society to:

identify and develop resources for education and support for victims of sexual harassment and abuse.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests the Stewardship Council of the United Church of Christ to establish a national fund (the Victims Assistance Fund) to be administered by the Coordinating Center for Women of the United Church of Christ to provide financial assistance to those who are victims of sexual abuse from clergy, staff, or volunteers of a church or other United Church of Christ body.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod requests the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and

TUESDAY MORNING

Society to convene an Implementation Team on the Pronouncement "Sexual Harassment and Abuse in the Church" to include representatives of instrumentalities and other national church bodies whose purpose shall be to:

coordinate the response of the United Church of Christ to sexual harassment and abuse in all settings of the church where trust in pastoral, counseling, employment or supervisory roles of church leadership may be violated;

assess the needs of the church for policy, programmatic or other resources to address the effects of sexual harassment and abuse in the church;

work collaboratively to identify or develop resources to meet the needs of the church in responding to allegations of sexual harassment and abuse;

establish a mechanism for ongoing communication and monitoring of strategies to end sexual harassment and abuse in the church.

The President of the church shall be invited to meet the Implementation Team to keep him or her apprised of efforts to respond to sexual harassment and abuse in the church and shall be afforded the opportunity to bring concerns to the group.

Others invited to attend shall be:

Commission for Racial Justice
Office for Church Life and Leadership
Office for Church in Society
Office of Communication
Stewardship Council
Pension Boards
United Church Board for Homeland Ministries
United Church Board for World Ministries
Council of Conference Ministers
Council for Health and Human Service Ministries
Council of Seminary Presidents

and such other bodies in the church as may be needed or deemed appropriate.

The cost of the initial gathering will be shared by all participants in an equitable manner, and subsequent meetings or follow up will be funded by a mechanism to be determined by the participants within normal budget procedures.

The Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society will report on the activities, programs and findings of the Implementation Team annually to the Executive Council and to each General Synod.

Subject to availability of funds.

13. RESOLUTION "CONSEQUENCES OF THE PERSIAN GULF WAR FOR A JUST PEACE CHURCH"

Moderator Gosselink invited the Rev. Peter Young (ND), chair of Committee 19, to offer consideration of the Resolution "Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church." He asked that Mr. Dale Bishop, United Church Board for World Ministries, be allowed to have voice without

vote to speak to this issue. It was allowed by consensus. He spoke briefly about the dire situation facing the people of Iraq where the infrastructure of the country has been destroyed.

Mr. H. Benjamin Bullard (CONN) offered as a friendly amendment to be added to the very end of the resolution the words "It recommends that an effective way to do this is for members to sign this resolution and present it to their congressional representative." It was accepted.

Ms. Diane Ranney (MASS) moved to amend the resolution. The amendment was passed.

91-GS-62 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod amends the Resolution "Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church" by adding a paragraph: "Be it further resolved" the words "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod requests our President, Paul Sherry, to communicate with the President of the United States, George Bush, demanding that our country use all available resources, both governmental and private to rebuild immediately the civilian infrastructure of Iraq destroyed by our military in the Persian Gulf War.

91-GS-63 Voted: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "Consequences of the Persian Gulf War for a Just Peace Church," as amended.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PERSIAN GULF WAR FOR A JUST PEACE CHURCH

Background and Theological Rationale

Feeling the pain and hopes of our times, and moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, successive General Synods of the United Church of Christ have asserted that we are a Just Peace Church. The recent Persian Gulf War, which devastated Kuwait and Iraq, killed in excess of 150,000 persons, left millions homeless, increased economic disparities, and deepened religious and national animosities in the Middle East, dramatizes the urgency of Christ's call for us to be peacemakers (Matt. 5:9).

Being peacemakers demands the seeking of God's realm, the striving for justice and the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18, Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24). Working for Just Peace is not optional but fundamental to the faith of Muslims, Jews and Christians.

In the Middle East today, peace requires stability. Any hope for a long term peace requires the building of friendships, the seeking of reconciliation between estranged and alienated peoples, and a reduction of incentive for using military solutions.

Above all peace means striving for justice, economically, politically and socially, addressing the disparity of wealth in the region and recognizing the national aspirations of the different groups.

We are a people of faith — whose Statement of Mission calls us "to hear and give voice to Creation's cry for justice and peace . . . to repent our silence and complicity with the forces of chaos and death."

Text of the Resolution

WHEREAS, the Fifteenth General Synod affirmed the United