

TUESDAY EVENING

adopt the Resolution "Acknowledging the 500th Anniversary of the Landing of Christopher Columbus and a United Church of Christ Response." (91-GS-82; See section 21 of this plenary session for voting results.)

The Rev. Wayne Martin (PSE) spoke on behalf of the committee. A false evacuation drill incorporated in Mr. Martin's presentation for dramatic effect was not well received by the delegation. There was unfavorable discussion focusing on the presentation instead of evaluating the merits of the resolution.

The Rev. Walter I. Thyng (ILL) moved discussion on this motion be postponed and brought back later. Mr. Thyng's motion was seconded.

91-GS-80 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod postpones discussion and action on the Resolution "Acknowledging the 500th Anniversary of the Landing of Christopher Columbus and a United Church of Christ Response."

5. RESOLUTION "500 YEARS OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND EURO-AMERICAN CONTACT: A CALL FOR NEW BEGINNINGS"

The Moderator again recognized Mr. Tubbs for the presentation of the Report of Committee Eight. Mr. Tubbs noted the location of the Resolution in Committee Reports, Part VII. On behalf of the committee, Mr. Tubbs moved that the Eighteenth General Synod adopt the Resolution "500 Years of American Indian and Euro-American Contact: A Call for New Beginnings."

Ms. Karol Parker, Chairperson of Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM), spoke on behalf of the committee regarding a separate perspective on the issue of correct historical interpretation and presentation.

President Sherry spoke to the delegates, reflecting on the previous difficult moment, and asked them to put aside their negative feelings regarding the presentation of the committee to continue with business.

There was some favorable discussion.

The Rev. Donald Freeman, Vice-Chairperson of the Program and Planning Committee for the Eighteenth General Synod (Business Committee), noted prior passage of the budget without funding allocated to this item, which estimates an implementation cost of \$100,000. Mr. Freeman moved the resolution be amended to solve this funding problem. The motion was seconded.

Mr. Tubbs and the Rev. Armin Schmidt, Executive Director of CAIM, responded to the funding question. Mr. Schmidt justified the inclusion of the paragraph as delegates realize most actions have concrete effects including monetary expenditures. CAIM is presently calling on 38 of the 39 conferences for contributions. Mr. Schmidt did not stand in opposition to the proposed amendment.

91-GS-81 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod amends the Resolution "500 Years of American Indian and Euro-American Contact: A Call for New Beginnings" by deleting the final sentence paragraph "Estimated cost to implement the resolution is \$100,000" on page 8 of Committee Reports, Part VII and substituting "Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds"; also in line one of the prior "Be It Further

Resolved" paragraph substitute "encourages" for "directs."

Discussion continued on the amended resolution.

The Rev. Elizabeth Fisher (CONN) moved the question.

91-GS-82 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "500 Years of American Indian and Euro-American Contact: A Call for New Beginnings," as amended.

500 YEARS OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND EURO-AMERICAN CONTACT: A CALL FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

Introduction

Plans are now underway to celebrate in 1992, the 500th Anniversary of Christopher Columbus' so called discovery of America. Great celebrations will occur throughout the Americas and in Europe. (The media, through documentaries and other stories, will do much to promote the celebration of Columbus' arrival.)

Yet, as this event is celebrated, some members of this society cannot join in for it marks the beginning of a very different period. The arrival of Columbus marked the beginning of the systematic destruction of Native American peoples throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Biblical and Theological Background

Throughout the Bible, God answers conquest, exile, genocide and oppression with creation, redemption and new life. God's mighty acts in history are good news to those who are oppressed, subjugated, and exiled today. These persons include the Native¹ peoples or Indians whose experience has been one of oppression, death and dispossession. To these people the scriptures give the Beatitudes (Matt. 5: 1-12).² A different message is given to those who covet, steal, kill and oppress. (Exodus 20:13, 15, 17, 23:6-9; 1 Kings 21.) The prophets consistently call for justice and they condemn all forms of oppression (Micah 2:2; Isaiah 5:7, 10:1-2).

The historical Jesus was a member of a nation which was comprised of various tribes (Numbers 26). The land had been subjugated and occupied by a mighty empire from Europe. The Roman conquerors had established a puppet government to handle "Jewish Affairs." Jesus' ministry began with an extended period of fasting and prayer, alone in a barren place (Matthew 4:1-11). This is not unlike the spiritual quest common among some American Indian people today. And from this quest came Jesus' announcement of good news to the poor, release to captives, sight for the blind, and liberty for the oppressed. (Luke 4:18-19).

General Background

The overall purpose of this resolution is to appeal for an honest and constructive national observance of the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary, to offer long overdue apologies, and to initiate some New Beginnings in American Indian and Euro-American relationships.

Of particular concern is the one-sided nature of the national observances of the Christopher Columbus 500th Anniversary which often exhibit a disregard of Native American perspectives and give only passing notice of Indian accomplishments and contributions.

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On August 7, 1984, Congress established and funded a Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission. There are no American Indian members on that 28 member national body. To date over 100 projects have been sanctioned by the Commission, but according to Commission documents none of these official projects are sponsored by or represent American Indians.

After five hundred years it is time to listen to God's call to end the injustice and oppression. It is time to welcome a new vision of God's will for all people and to make a new beginning in our life together as the Children of God. Now is the time for renewal and transformation of each person, for the United Church of Christ and for our communities. God calls us to new beginnings.

Text of the Resolution

WHEREAS, Christopher Columbus came to a land which was already occupied by millions of people who had built thriving civilizations and societies;

WHEREAS, American Indians welcomed the newcomers, provided technical and material assistance for their very survival and freely shared their land;

WHEREAS, American Indian people have consistently made sacrifices of land and resources for the welfare of all and continue to offer strength and insight toward solving acute problems in economics, ecology and human relations;

WHEREAS, Christopher Columbus' arrival in the hemisphere resulted in the annihilation of the Arawak Tribe, the first people he encountered, and the eventual genocide of over nine million people in the area now considered the United States (the population is estimated to have been at 10 million in 1492 and was reduced to 240,000 by 1900);

WHEREAS, to speak of a "discovery" is patently erroneous and represents the historical viewpoint of the Euro-American immigrants only;

WHEREAS, American Indians have the opportunity to educate the larger society about the events and consequences of the 1492 contact;

WHEREAS, the apostle Paul's words, "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2 (RSV)) speak directly to the way people of faith should respond to this event;

WHEREAS, The United Church of Christ Executive Council, and various congregations, conferences, instrumentalities and agencies have taken action calling for positive and constructive response to 500 years of American Indian and Euro-American contact.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod:

Calls upon the national, state and local Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commissions, to acknowledge the consequences of successive European incursions upon Indian people, and to allocate sufficient resources to fully support American Indian scholarship, art, gatherings and events in observance of the 500th anniversary, and

Calls upon the President and Congress of the United States of America to enforce prior legislation, and enact new legislation which will:

Secure, preserve and provide all land, water, mineral and other rights; all services and all compensation as agreed upon in the treaties made between tribal governments and the United States Government; and which will

Actively protect American Indian persons and resources from the poisoning brought about by the dumping of toxic and nuclear wastes on their land and in their waterways; and which will

Strengthen and expand freedom of religion legislation for American Indians including access to and control of sacred sites and the honorable return and reburial of human ancestral remains currently held in museum and educational institutions.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod:

Directs the Council for American Indian Ministry of the United Church of Christ to convene a national gathering of American Indian members of the United Church of Christ to develop a program which will chart the course of the UCC American Indian Ministry in the 21st Century;

Directs that CAIM submit its report and recommendations from this gathering to the Twentieth General Synod.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod:

Directs the Executive Council to provide sufficient funding to accomplish this event and to prepare and disseminate the documentation generated by the national gathering of United Church of Christ American Indians.

Subject to the availability of funds.

6. INVITATION TO NINETEENTH GENERAL SYNOD

An audio-visual presentation introduced the delegates to St. Louis, the site selected for the Nineteenth General Synod, July 15-20, 1993. As this Synod is planned in joint session with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) General Assembly, information was included about the differences between the Disciples of Christ General Assembly and the United Church of Christ General Synod. One such difference was the delegate selection process, resulting in approximately 8,000 delegates for the Disciples of Christ General Assembly versus approximately 700 delegates for the UCC General Synod.

The Moderator recognized the Rev. Gayle Engel, Conference Minister from Missouri, and the Rev. Martha Ann Baumer, Conference Minister from Illinois-South, who invited the United Church of Christ delegates and visitors to the Nineteenth General Synod in St. Louis, Missouri. They led the delegates and visitors in singing a revised version of "Meet Me in St. Louis" (B. Van Ausdall, Missouri).

Meet us in St. Louis, Louie,
Meet at Synod there.
With Disciples meeting also,
We'll have lots to share.
Climb the arch from where you can see all,
Cheer the Cardinals when they play ball.
Meet us in St. Louis, Louie,
Meet at Synod there.