

TUESDAY EVENING

WHEREAS, the colonial situation of Puerto Rico is dehumanizing, and immoral.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod demands that President Bush and the Congress undertake a process for Puerto Ricans to achieve self-determination and, as a gesture of good will, take the following steps, which are part of any legitimate process of self-determination:

grant immediate and unconditional amnesty to all Puerto Rican prisoners of conscience (as defined by Amnesty International) and political prisoners;

grant amnesty to those advocates of independence in exile;

cease prosecution and persecution of advocates of independence.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod calls upon the United Church of Christ to be involved in the justice work in the following areas:

support the "Freedom Now!" campaign through the use of petitions and presence and support during trials of advocates of independence;

engage in an educational campaign on issues of Puerto Rico;

urge local churches to adopt a prisoner of conscience;

encourage local church members to write to their national representatives;

request the President of the United Church of Christ to make pastoral visits to prisoners of conscience to offer the support of the church.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod reaffirms the Seventeenth General Synod Resolution "Ministry of Prisoners of Conscience."

Subject to the availability of funds.

9. CONCERN EXPRESSED FOR MOBILITY IMPAIRED

Ms. Diana D. Good (ILL) spoke of the discomfort endured at this Synod by persons who are mobility impaired. She called for an awareness of the mobility impaired and their minority status and for the sensitivity of leadership to this.

10. RESOLUTION "WITNESS TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA"

The Moderator recognized Mr. True for the presentation of the Report of Committee 15. Mr. True referred the delegates to the revised resolution as found in Committee Reports, Part VII, page 11. On behalf of the committee, Mr. True moved that the Eighteenth General Synod adopt the Resolution "Witness to Human Rights in Guatemala."

The Rev. Nancy E. Wright-Gray (MASS), spoke on behalf of the committee.

Ms. Gosselink responded to Ms. Good's comments and spoke of her courage of speaking from the heart.

There was some discussion on the resolution.

91-GS-86 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "Witness to Human Rights in Guatemala."

WITNESS TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA

It is written in the letter to the Hebrews, "Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them. Remember those who are suffering, as though you were suffering as they are" (Hebrews 13:3).

WHEREAS, Guatemala has been called "A Nation of Prisoners" by Americas Watch which, along with many other organizations, has recounted that since 1966 in excess of 100,000 civilians have been killed and an additional 38,000 have disappeared. Their accounts report that these inhuman acts were mostly the result of actions by the Guatemala military and paramilitary organizations.

These actions have resulted in eliminating an entire generation of leaders in the urban areas and have taken the form of indiscriminate massacres, sometimes of entire communities, in the countryside;

WHEREAS, the Central American Peace Plan signed by the five Central American heads of state in Guatemala City in August, 1987 called for respect for human rights, complete freedom of the press, democratization and urgent attention to the needs of refugees and the displaced. After the planned and deliberate suppression of many relevant details by the administration of President Cerezo, the International Commission on Verification and Follow-up issued a cautiously worded report in January, 1988, which stated that:

1. They have received information from non-governmental organizations that the Guatemala Accords have had a limited effect on the human rights situation in Guatemala;
2. They have learned of the existence of fear, not only about this situation, but also about the lack of sufficient guarantees to publicly discuss the questions; and

WHEREAS, the Guatemalan Army has granted itself de facto emergency powers in Guatemala's highland provinces, severely restricting freedom of movement, residence and association for the nation's Indian majority and continuing to force peasants to perform onerous civil patrol duty;

WHEREAS, the violent suppression of the free press has intensified, resulting in the closing of one newspaper and two international news agencies; intimidation by groups allied to the military continues to limit press freedom severely. While the majority of journalists eschew reporting on military violence, the New York based Committee to Protect Journalists stated that between 1976 and 1985, Guatemala had the western hemisphere's second highest rate of violence against journalists. At least 48 Guatemalan journalists were abducted or killed by government security forces; and

WHEREAS, the Central American Peace Plan calls on the governments to "give urgent attention to the estimated two million people who have fled their homes as a result of fighting and counterinsurgency" and whereas the Episcopal Conference of Guatemalan Bishops issued a statement recognizing serious obstacles to refugee repatriation, recommending that

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so long as the Army could not guarantee that returning refugees would not be subjected to violence or forced to live in model villages, it was "preferable for the refugees to remain in Mexico." The acceptance of amnesty provisions would be extremely dangerous for those involved as it would attach the stigma of subversive association.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests the President to:

1. Petition the Congress of the United States to adhere to Section 502(B) of the Foreign Assistance Act, which bars military aid to governments which engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights, for the following outcomes:
 - a. a continuation of the ban on military aid and commercial arms sales to Guatemala;
 - b. an end to United States National Guard exercises with the Guatemalan military;
 - c. an end to the United States training and logistical support for the Guatemalan military;
 - d. strict control of the Guatemalan military in United States anti-narcotics operations;
 - e. disbursement of Economic Support Funds for Guatemala only on condition that violations of human rights be substantially reduced.
2. Call upon the President of the United States and the Congress to continue to urge the United Nations Human Rights Commission to condemn the deterioration of human rights in Guatemala in the strongest possible terms, including the appointment of a special investigator to be stationed full-time in the country.
3. Encourage member congregations to establish partnerships with urban communities and rural villages in Guatemala, in careful consultation with the appropriate officials in the United Church Board for World Ministries.

Subject to the availability of funds.

11. RESOLUTION "CALLING FOR THE RESTORING OF NORMAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA"

Ms. Gosselink recognized Mr. True for the presentation of the Report of Committee 15. He referred the delegates to the resolution as found in Advance Materials Section II, page 120. The committee proposed no changes. On behalf of the committee, Mr. True moved that the Eighteenth General Synod adopt the Resolution "Calling for the Restoring of Normal Relations Between the United States and Cuba." Mr. True spoke on behalf of the committee. There was no discussion.

91-GS-87 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "Calling for the Restoring of Normal Relations Between the United States and Cuba."

CALLING FOR THE RESTORING OF NORMAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA

WHEREAS, for the past 32 years the relations between the United States and Cuba have been characterized by alienation;

WHEREAS, the Cuban government is considering reforms in emigration;

WHEREAS, discrimination on the basis of religious faith is in process of being eliminated;

WHEREAS, a move toward normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba would encourage these and other reforms; and

WHEREAS, we as Christians believe that the teachings and spirit of our faith call for reconciliation, and beyond reconciliation, the creating of justice and peace for every nation.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges that both the United States and Cuba engage in conversations to institute plans for new relations between these neighboring countries leading to justice and peace.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Eighteenth General Synod requests its executive officers and instrumentalities to offer such assistance in the process of reconciliation as may be helpful in establishing normal relations between the United States and Cuba.

Subject to the availability of funds.

12. RESOLUTION "JUSTICE IN THE MAQUILADORAS"

The Moderator again recognized Mr. True for the presentation of the Report of Committee 15. He referred the delegates to the revised resolution as found in Committee Reports, Part VII, page 13. On behalf of the committee, Mr. True moved that the Eighteenth General Synod adopt the Resolution "Justice in the Maquiladoras."

Mr. True spoke on behalf of the committee.

There was some discussion. Mr. Danny Roman (FLA) requested clarification on the use of "Maquiladoras" in reference either to the people or to the region. Mr. True responded that the committee inquired as to the intended meaning of "Maquiladoras," received unclear information, and chose to reference the region. Mr. Roman suggested it also as a term used for workers in that region at those corporations and offered a friendly amendment to delete "the." Mr. True accepted the friendly amendment.

91-GS-88 VOTED: The Eighteenth General Synod adopted the Resolution "Justice in the Maquiladoras."

JUSTICE IN THE MAQUILADORAS

WHEREAS, in its pronouncement "Christian Faith and Economic Justice," the UCC has declared that "We establish as a goal the just transformation of the global economy into an economic order that fundamentally ensures economic, racial, and social justice for all of God's people throughout the world";

WHEREAS, ninety percent of the over 2,000 foreign corporations that have set up assembly and manufacturing plants in Mexico under the Maquiladoras program are United States-owned transnationals;