

MONDAY AFTERNOON

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has historic ties with the Jaffna district in the north of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), beginning at the arrival there on March 22, 1816 of James Richards, with his wife, Sarah Richards, being one of the five founders of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (predecessor organization of the United Church Board for World Ministries); and has had a continuous missionary presence in Sri Lanka since that time;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), through the United Church Board for World Ministries and the Division of Overseas Ministries, respectively, have ongoing ties with the Jaffna district;

WHEREAS, the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ has a special partnership with the Jaffna Diocese (the one Sri Lankan diocese of the Church of South India) and, in the past, the Rhode Island Conference had a similar partnership;

WHEREAS, the human toll from fifteen years of conflict makes the Sri Lanka situation one in special need of attention;

WHEREAS, in the context of emergency rule, human rights continue to be violated in all parts of the country and intimidation of government opponents is widely practiced;

WHEREAS, the Jaffna Peninsula is under continual blockade, is intermittently bombed by Sri Lankan forces and an all-out assault is a constant possibility;

WHEREAS, it appears clear that the main political actors lack the will to negotiate a settlement of this conflict;

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of Jaffna College Funds, at its meeting on June 7, 1991, called on the United Church Board for World Ministries to address human rights issues in Sri Lanka as a top priority and to communicate these concerns to the governments of the United States and Sri Lanka;

WHEREAS, the United Church Board for World Ministries at its 183rd Annual Meeting held on June 26-29, 1992, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, passed a resolution calling on the churches and the international community to work for a peaceful resolution of the conflict;

WHEREAS, the Sri Lanka Task Force of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference is working diligently to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict through contacts with churches, ecumenical agencies, the United States Government and the international community; and

WHEREAS, at the initiative of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference and the United Church Board for World

Ministries, a Sri Lanka Action Coalition has been formed under the auspices of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA for the purpose of influencing United States policy toward Sri Lanka;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ hereby calls on: all parties to the conflict, including the Sri Lanka Government, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam(LTTE), the anti-LTTE Tamil groups and the civilian Home Guards, to cease fighting and observe human rights conventions; all political parties and interest groups in Sri Lanka to assist the negotiating process by declaring acceptable terms for a settlement, and by abandoning the politics of narrow nationalism, chauvinism and short-term gain;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod calls on the international community, including the United States Government and other foreign aid donors, non-governmental organizations and churches, to promote peace and human rights in Sri Lanka and to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of that country;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod calls on the United Church Board for World Ministries to continue, along with the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), its active support of the ecumenically based Sri Lanka Action Coalition;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod calls on the Office for Church in Society and the Office of Communication to facilitate the efforts of the United Church Board for World Ministries and the Indiana-Kentucky Conference to attract national media attention to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod calls on the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Office for Church in Society and local churches to use all available means to educate the members of the United Church of Christ on this issue.

Subject to the availability of funds.

4. RESOLUTION "THE BRUTALIZATION AND OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN IN TIMES OF WAR"

Continuing with the report of Committee Five, Rev. Elizabeth Fisher moved the adoption of the Resolution "The Brutalization and Objectification of Women in Times of War."

93-GS-40 VOTED: The Nineteenth General Synod adopts the Resolution "The Brutalization and Objectification of Women in Time of War."

MONDAY AFTERNOON

RESOLUTION "THE BRUTALIZATION AND OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN IN TIMES OF WAR"

WHEREAS, women's bodies have been and continue to be used as battlefields in territorial disputes;

WHEREAS, in this century French women have been raped by German soldiers; German women by Soviet soldiers; Korean by Japanese; Vietnamese by Americans; women in Bangladesh and Liberia have been raped during civil wars; and now rape is occurring on all sides of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia;

WHEREAS, reports received from Bosnia-Herzegovina reveal the systematic use of rape and forced pregnancy as a tactic of colonization, domination, terror and "ethnic cleansing." Amid the rape that is occurring on all sides, Serbian soldiers are systematically and repeatedly raping Muslim and Croatian women and girls until they become pregnant, confining them in "rape/death" camps where they "are being forced to give birth to Serbian babies" (see World Council of Churches "Rape of Women in War"). The horror of such a reality, the bleak future for these women when they seek to be restored to a culture rooted in a traditional understanding of marriage and family and the grimness which awaits a generation of "children of hate" are terrible to consider. Yet they must be considered and addressed by people of conscience; and

WHEREAS, this brutalization and objectification of women is virtually ignored after war's end, resulting in generations who live in hatred and fear;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod calls on Conferences, Associations and local churches to speak out against the atrocities being perpetrated on women in times of war by standing with the oppressed and speaking out against injustice, especially rape and forced pregnancy;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod requests agencies and Instrumentalities, Conferences, Associations and local churches to speak out against this reprehensible violence against our sisters by taking the following actions:

1. supporting US ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. (Resource packet "Women in the World: Ending Discrimination" available through United Church Resources 1-800-325-7061);
2. writing to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General (United Nations, New York, NY 10017), to request that the United Nations make efforts to provide sensitive medical and psychological care for the

survivors of rape and for full investigation and prosecution of rape as human rights violations; and

3. demanding prosecution of systematic use of rape and forced pregnancy as war crimes.

5. RESOLUTION "IN SUPPORT OF MULTILATERAL PEACEMAKING ACTIONS TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS"

The Rev. Fisher continued the report of Committee Five and moved that the Nineteenth General Synod adopt the Resolution "In Support of Multilateral Peacemaking Actions To Resolve The Conflict in The Balkans." Rev. Fisher spoke to the Resolution.

Rev. Gerald Hanberry (PC) proposed amending the Resolution as follows: (1) In the 11th paragraph eliminate the entire first sub-paragraph beginning with the words "a multilateral peacemaking effort," and ending with "heavy weapons." (2) In the 11th paragraph in the second sub-paragraph eliminate the first phrase "at the same time and parallel to this." (3) Eliminate paragraphs 12 and 13 in their entirety. (4) In paragraph 14 end with the word "Balkans."

Mr. Seth Patterson (OH) asked if the amendment would change the intent of the Committee. Rev. Fisher, committee chair, replied that, she believed, it would.

Following discussion, the Moderator called for the vote. As the vote was close, Moderator Ruhe called for a Division of the House.

6. PRESENTATION BY THE COUNCIL OF INSTRUMENTALITY EXECUTIVES

While the tellers counted the votes for the amendment, Moderator Ruhe introduced the Rev. Mary Sue Gast, Executive Director of the Co-Ordinating Center for Women in Church and Society. Ms. Gast introduced a video presentation on behalf of the Instrumentality Executives focusing on some of the work being done by the national agencies. The theme concerned mission. Ms. Gast explained that originally the video was just one part of the presentation but, due to time constraints, only the video would be used.

7. CONTINUATION OF RESOLUTION "IN SUPPORT OF MULTILATERAL PEACEMAKING ACTIONS TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS"

GS-93-41 VOTED: The Nineteenth General Synod amends the Resolution "In Support of Multilateral Peacemaking Actions to Resolve the Conflict in the Balkans" by a vote of 324 to 277.