

5. AGENDA COMMITTEE

Ms. Mary Ann Neevel, Chair of the Agenda Committee, reviewed the business process and reminded the delegates that only 20 minutes would be allowed for each committee report for the duration of Synod.

6. PROPOSED PRONOUNCEMENT “ON VIOLENCE IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND FILM”

Assistant Moderator Taylor called on Mr. Luis A. Perez to report on the work of Committee Two. Mr. Perez spoke briefly regarding the work of the committee. He directed the delegates to typographical corrections in the document and moved the adoption of the Proposed Pronouncement “Violence in Electronic Media and Film.” Mr. Perez spoke to the motion. There was no discussion.

95-GS-42 VOTED: The Twentieth General Synod adopts the Proposed Pronouncement “Violence in Electronic Media and Film.”

PRONOUNCEMENT “ON VIOLENCE IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND FILM”

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this pronouncement is to call upon the United Church of Christ in all its settings to live our role in resisting hate and witnessing to the Prince of Peace by providing leadership in our church and in society that will help to reduce violence in society by reducing violence in electronic media and film.

II. BACKGROUND

We live in a climate of violence. Violence is everywhere: in city and suburb, in mean streets and quiet lanes, in private conversations and public media. Our society knows violence through abuse and rape, rising crime rates and diminished trust. We acknowledge that the climate of the psychological violence of words, as well as physical violence, breeds fear and rapidly escalating concerns for personal security. This in turn leads to more violence and contributes to society’s tightening cycle of violence.

Violence is simple and brutal, but its roots are complex. We know it to be bred in families where children and spouses are abused and maltreated, where problems are met with force or threat of force. People who are in submissive positions to authority, actual or perceived, including women, racial ethnic persons as well as lesbian, gay and bi-sexual persons are particularly vulnerable to violence. We know that violence may be related to learning disabilities and chemical dependency. And we know that violence is exacerbated in communities and

families living in poverty and by the prominence given to it in films, television and other media.

Women often are portrayed in the media as being subjected to sexual violation and violence. These sexual situations would appear to create no harmful effects for women when in fact the context of the encounter is a power or authority relationship. The electronic media and film often reinforce this authority/victim relationship, depicting it as harmless or neutral.

Violence cannot be reduced to one cause. It is clear, however, that films and television play a role not only in reflecting but also in contributing to a violent and mean world.

Films and television:

- give the only information many of us receive about some aspects of life. Frequently, there are no other comparable sources of information available on human relationships or complex social issues;

- model and prompt emotional responses to the realities of individual and social life. Entertainment that provides a vicarious experience of violence also models a response, often one of anger and retribution;

- over-represent violence, with television sometimes showing as many as 30 violent acts per hour as preferred solutions to disagreements. This increases viewer concern for self-protection and a fear of going out alone. In addition, it enhances the acceptance of utilizing violence as a solution to problems;

- increase an appetite and tolerance for entertainment with a violent content, since the more violence an audience sees, the more violence it will want. This appetite for violence entails an increased callousness to people who may be hurting or in need; and

- sexualize violence by rendering it pleasurable and/or by depicting an erotic payoff for the protagonists who initiate the sexual violence.

While films and television are certainly not the only cause of a climate of violence, they bear a considerable share of the responsibility and, thus, the occasion for this policy statement.

III. THEOLOGICAL, BIBLICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE: OUR FAITH PERSPECTIVE

We are churches gathered in the story that is the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ! Not only did Jesus teach us to love our enemies, he himself prayed for his enemies when submitted to the violence of the cross.