

## MONDAY AFTERNOON

### 21. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Assistant Moderator Taylor called upon Ms. Edith Guffey for the announcements.

### 22. RECESS

The Moderator declared the Seventh Plenary of the Twentieth General Synod to be complete and in recess until 7:30 PM.

## MONDAY EVENING, JULY 3, 1995

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Moderator Victor Melendez called the Eighth Plenary of the Twentieth General Synod to order at 7:35 PM.

### 2. SPEAK OUT!

Moderator Melendez called on the first Speak Out! participant to begin the Speak Out! session.

Rev. George Schowalter (WIS) spoke about the importance of Christian Education, stating that we must teach and prepare Christians to live in a diverse and pluralistic world. He encouraged the support of teaching ministries at every level in our church.

Rev. Ken Leischner (NEB) recognized and expressed thanks to the Rev. James Nelson for his teachings.

Rev. Daryl Greene (OHIO) suggests that within the new structure we also include persons who are living at or below poverty level in our formula for the way we fill positions to help eliminate prejudice and injustice.

Ms. Sarah Sawtell (SW) welcomed and celebrated the election of the Rev. Ann Calvin Rogers-Witte as the new Southwest Conference Minister, effective September 1, 1995.

Mr. Clint Cannon (WASH) paid tribute to the Rev. David Brown and his fifty years of service in the United Church of Christ.

Rev. Kathy Timpany (KO) celebrated reelection of Ms. Edith Guffey as Secretary of the United Church of Christ and eagerly awaits the second edition of the "Guffey Reader."

Rev. Earl Menchhofer (WASH) announced that the next National Youth Event will be held in 1996 and asked the delegates to encourage youth from their churches to attend.

Mr. Ken Brown, member of the Business Committee, brought attention to the case of the political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal. Mr. Abu-Jamal is now on Death Row in Pennsylvania and is scheduled for execution on August 17, 1995. See Mr. Brown or the Rev. Nozomi Ikuta for information on contacting the Governor in Pennsylvania.

Ms. Pat Jackman (NY) urged that local churches be kept informed of restructure plans as they are undertaken by the United Church of Christ.

Rev. Linda Gruber spoke about the The Living Theological Heritage Series by Barbara Brown Zikmund, and invited participation.

### 3. POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

The Rev. Ronald Evans (CONN) asked the Moderator for the possibility of a straw vote of the Synod that would indicate if they wish to send a message to the Structure Committee to consider the issue of nomenclature as it relates to the titles of church leaders.

Moderator Melendez noted that a straw vote is non binding but he was willing to grant the request. Moderator Melendez asked for a straw vote of those willing to notify the transition committee about concerns related to the titles of the officers in the new structure.

By straw vote, the Twentieth General Synod indicated it did not wish to notify the transition committee on the interpretation of the titles of the officers in the new structure.

### 4. RESOLUTION "VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY AND WORLD"

Moderator Melendez called on Ms. Merlene Bagley (CAC), Chairperson of Committee Three. Ms. Bagley referred the delegates to the Program/Worship and Business Book, pages 164-166, and to packet E. She expressed thanks to the committee for their diligence and thanked others who assisted the Committee in its work. Ms. Bagley discussed the Resolution and moved the adoption of "Violence in Our Society and World." She yielded time to the Rev. Jeffrey Spencer to speak to the question.

Mr. Spencer shared his personal experience of violence and urged support of the Resolution. Discussion followed.

Mr. Seth Patterson (OHIO) recommended a friendly amendment to delete the second to last "Be it further resolved" section on page 4, lines 6-12, and replace it with: "Be it further resolved that the Twentieth General

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Synod encourages all members of the body of the United Church of Christ to register their opposition to all forms of violence by calling or writing television stations, media producers and companies involved. Furthermore, when such action fails to receive results, to boycott specific products made or sold by advertisers of programming that sensationalizes acts of violence and/or portrays violence as the only solution."

Ms. Bagley, Chair of Committee Three, agreed that this was a friendly amendment. Moderator Melendez accepted the amendment.

Following further discussion, Moderator Melendez called for the vote.

95-GS-55 VOTED: The Twentieth General Synod adopts the Resolution on "Violence in Our Society and World."

### RESOLUTION ON "VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY AND WORLD"

#### Summary

Violence touches all of us. Its roots are deep and entangled around issues related to race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and economics, among others. Violence pervades our past, shapes our present reality and threatens our future. Violence is not far removed from our lives. It is very close to home, indeed, it is often in our homes. Children see murders on the street, witness domestic violence in their homes and are assaulted with a constant stream of violence on the movie screen, on the television and on the radio. Children not only observe violence on a daily basis, they are often its victims. Adults have often responded to violence through isolation, building higher walls and fences, buying more sophisticated burglar alarms, purchasing guns for protection and abandoning life in the public sphere. Meanwhile the government's response is too often to build more prisons, eliminate opportunities for rehabilitation and cut prevention programs which would offer young people an alternative to violent streets and homes.

All of us suffer from the increase in violence in our society. We are, understandably, fearful and even at times paralyzed by the magnitude of the problem. Indeed, a lack of hope is often at the root of violence and it is all the more essential for us, as people of faith, to identify and lift up the source of hope and healing along with the possibilities for faithful action which we can bring to the epidemic of violence. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it...Returning violence for violence multiplies violence...Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." As a church let us assess the toll that violence levies

against us all. Then may we proceed to invert the descending spiral of violence into an uprising of hope.

#### Biblical/Theological/Ethical Rationale

*"Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise."* Isaiah 60: 18.

Violence is an exertion of force so as to injure or abuse. Violence encompasses violations of trust and infringements upon the integrity, wholeness, or health of another or of oneself. To indulge in violence is to deny the full humanity of the person violated and to treat that person as an object to be used and/or discarded. Ultimately violence breaks faith with the belief that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God [Genesis 1: 26-27] and thus worthy of respect.

The climate of violence is the climate of despair. Despair characterizes those who are violent, threatens those who are violated and marks those who regret violence but are resigned to its inevitability.

Violence is commonly conceived in individual terms with a single perpetrator and a single victim. The reality, however, is far more complex. Violence is a part of the very structures that define the way we relate to each other socially, politically, economically and spiritually. None of us is solely victim, perpetrator or bystander. Violence manifests itself in our language, in our social structures and in our public policy as it lingers in our land. Recent immigrants to the United States and gay and lesbian people are current targets of increased hate crime violence, as other groups have been in the past.

#### Text of the Resolution

WHEREAS the American Missionary Association, the Commission for Racial Justice, the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society, the Office for Church in Society, and the Twentieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ seek to have the whole church begin to address the pandemic of violence in our society;

WHEREAS our Christian convictions call us to be peacemakers in a world in need of peace;

WHEREAS violence is assaulting all persons through physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and through the media;

WHEREAS homicide is the leading cause of death for African-American youths 15 to 24 years old and every 4 hours an African American child is killed by a gun;

WHEREAS nearly 50,000 children were killed by guns in the United States between 1979 and 1991, almost equaling the number of Americans killed in Vietnam, and the

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number of children killed in gun-related incidents is the equivalent of a classroom full of students every two days;

WHEREAS domestic violence occurs every 15 seconds in this country and is the leading cause of death for women; with 30 percent of women murdered in the United States being the victims of husbands, boyfriends or former partners;

WHEREAS children and the elderly, the most vulnerable in our society, are not safe in their homes or communities and are afraid for their lives;

WHEREAS the incidence of rape continues to increase, leaving no girl or woman free from threat either at home or in public places;

WHEREAS violence pervades all our lives, from suburbs to inner cities, in rural areas of the country, in streets, homes, schools and even churches;

WHEREAS the United States is the leading weapons dealer in the world, supplying 70 percent of the international weapons market;

WHEREAS the acceptance of violence as a “norm” in our society is a violation of the most fundamental of all our Christian beliefs; and

WHEREAS all persons deserve a place to live where they know love and can live without fear;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twentieth General Synod publicly and actively opposes violence as a societal norm;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twentieth General Synod calls upon the Commission for Racial Justice, the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society, the Office for Church in Society, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, and the United Church Board for World Ministries, in collaboration with the Conferences:

- to facilitate nationwide hearings on violence in the next biennium, inviting local church members and members of the larger community to testify about the impact of violence in their lives and to share strategies they have used to respond to violence in their communities, and to report to the Twenty-First General Synod on the results of these hearings and proposed strategies;
- to facilitate opportunities for United Church of Christ members to participate in local, regional and national gatherings to form partnerships and offer training and assistance in setting up programs to end violence;
- to pursue legislation in the United States Congress, State Legislatures and the United Nations that will help

diminish the acceptance of violence in any form and restrict the availability of instruments of violence using every means possible to advise our leaders and the leaders of the world that the violence must stop;

- to work with members of local congregations to provide education in peaceful alternatives for conflict resolution and explore alternative forms of nonviolent entertainment; and
- to help local congregations to educate and heighten personal awareness of personal and family attitudes, forms of discipline and language of violence such as jokes or threats;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twentieth General Synod:

- Calls on all local churches, Conferences and Associations to become involved in ending the violence in our society and endorses the national project of United Black Christians “Churches as a Safe Space;”
- Calls upon United Church of Christ members to advocate for public policy programs which address the root causes of violence and poverty; and
- Encourages each local congregation to organize its own peace action team to develop resources for alternative entertainment activities and family violence awareness and prevention curriculum;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twentieth General Synod encourages all members of the body of the United Church of Christ to register their opposition to all forms of violence by calling or writing television stations, media producers, and companies involved. Furthermore, when such action fails to receive results, to boycott specific products made or sold by advertisers of programming that sensationalizes acts of violence and/or portrays violence as the only solution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twentieth General Synod supports the President of the United Church of Christ in speaking out boldly and prophetically on this issue across the country.

Subject to the availability of funds.

### **5. RESOLUTION “CREATING A WORLD SAFE FOR CHILDREN FREE FROM VIOLENCE”**

Moderator Melendez asked Ms. Bagley to continue the report of Committee Three. Ms. Bagley explained that Committee Three had looked at the resolution regarding the Character Counts program and could not support it because it called the church to endorse a specific program. However, the committee could not totally ignore the basic