

FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Assistant Moderator MacDonald opened the floor for questions. There were several questions that were responded to by members of the Constitution and Bylaws Revision Team.

7. CALL TO ORDER

Assistant Moderator MacDonald called the Twenty-first General Synod back to order and thanked Ms. Neevel and the Constitution and Bylaws Revision Team for their hard and diligent work.

8. RECOGNITION OF OVERSEAS PERSONNEL

Assistant Moderator MacDonald called on the Rev. David Y. Hirano, Executive Vice President of the United Church Board for World Ministries, to introduce the Overseas Mission Personnel who were present. Mr. Hirano stated that the United Church of Christ carries out its global ministries with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through the Common Global Ministries Board. He spoke of the work of the Common Global Ministries Board and introduced overseas personnel Betty Jane and J. Martin Baily (Middle East-Jerusalem), Cerina and Richard Blakney (Middle East-Turkey) and Jim and Betsy Lehman (Southern Asia-India).

Ms. Lehman spoke on behalf of the Overseas Personnel, thanking the Church for its commitment to the healing of the nations through the helping, teaching, reconciling and healing ministries the church supports. She said that this is a covenant with God.

The delegates and visitors thanked the Overseas Personnel for their work with sustained and generous applause.

9. CONTINUATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL REPORT/PARTNERSHIP AFFIRMATION

Assistant Moderator MacDonald called on Ms. Brenda Allen who referred the delegates to the Resolution entitled "Affirmation of Partnership with the Council of Churches in Cuba" on Page 147 of the Program, Worship and Business Book. Ms. Allen moved the adoption of the Resolution.

Assistant Moderator MacDonald called for discussion. Delegates from the Florida Conference expressed concern about supporting the resolution. The Florida delegates asked if the Cuban Ecumenical Council had taken a stand on issues of religious persecution by the Cuban government, where the Cuban Ecumenical Council stands on racism and if the Council had taken a stand on the death penalty or freedom of the press. Delegates from the Florida Conference said they would abstain from voting on this resolution.

Discussion continued and other delegates spoke in support of the resolution and in support of the Council of Churches in Cuba.

97-GS-12 VOTED: The Twenty-first General Synod adopts the Resolution "Affirmation of Partnership with the Council of Churches in Cuba."

The Florida Delegation unanimously abstained from voting on this resolution.

RESOLUTION "AFFIRMATION OF PARTNERSHIP WITH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CUBA"

WHEREAS, the Council of Churches of Cuba joins together most of the Protestant communion in that country for more than three decades;

WHEREAS, when ties with churches in the United States and in many other parts of the world were broken and missionaries had to leave, the Council assisted its members in their struggle to survive without support from abroad;

WHEREAS, the Council of Churches of Cuba has demonstrated the necessary courage to stand up and defend the legitimacy of the ministry of churches within a revolutionary and socialist society, and has assisted its member churches in finding opportunities to serve, as part of that society, in programs and projects attuned with their Christian faith;

WHEREAS, thanks to such efforts, the Cuban government has begun to appreciate that witness and recognize the importance of the relationship of Cuban Protestant churches with church partners around the world; and

WHEREAS, the Cuban Ecumenical Council has developed alternative programs and projects to assist the churches as they try to alleviate the effects of the U.S. economic embargo;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ, celebrates and affirms the partnership with the Cuban Council of Churches; a partnership also shared with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, through the Common Global Ministries Board.

Subject to the availability of funds.

10. RESPONSE TO THE AFFIRMATION OF PARTNERSHIP

Assistant Moderator MacDonald called upon the Rev. David A. Vargas, Area Executive for Latin America and the Caribbean. Mr. Vargas spoke of the work of the Council of Churches of Cuba and introduced the General Secretary of the Council, the Rev. Pablo Oden Marichal-Rodriguez.

Mr. Marichal-Rodriguez spoke on behalf of the Council of Churches of Cuba, saying that the challenge is for the Council to continue in its mission to continue to proclaim the gospel and serve the people of Cuba. He said that the concerns expressed have been heard and must be taken into consideration. Mr. Marichal-Rodriguez closed by thanking the General Synod, again, for their positive vote offering his hope that our churches and our people should never be divided by political, sociological or economic reasons because we really are one in Jesus Christ.

President Sherry and Mr. Marichal-Rodriguez exchanged