

## MONDAY EVENING

Rev. Cynthia S. Bump (MO), Executive Director of the Missouri Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, reminded delegates that January 22, 1998 will be the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rowe vs. Wade court decision. She asked those with stories about this issue to share them at the booth in the exhibit hall.

The Rev. Albert W. Kovacs (CA.SY) briefly explained the history of the Calvin Synod.

Ms. Vickie Luken (OHIO) reminded the delegates that there were many cookies and buckeyes left. She encouraged delegations to pick up a box of cookies to share.

Ms. Traci King (MO) asked the delegates to celebrate the 25 years of Conference Ministry of the Rev. A. Gayle Engel, Conference Minister of the Missouri Conference.

Assistant Moderator MacDonald thanked the delegates for their participation in the Speak Out!

### 3. CHILDREN'S BANNER

Assistant Moderator MacDonald called upon Ms. Jennifer Hart to present a special gift of a banner of the General Synod logo made by the children who participated in the Children's Program of General Synod.

The delegates and visitors thanked the children with an extended round of applause.

### 4. AGENDA COMMITTEE

Assistant Moderator MacDonald asked Ms. Vicki Beckman to speak on behalf the Agenda Committee. Ms. Beckman spoke of the many pieces of business yet to be addressed by the General Synod. She encouraged delegates to move the remaining agenda as quickly as possible to ensure all business would be addressed. She suggested that the delegates limit the number to two persons speaking in favor and two against each piece of business. Assistant Moderator MacDonald proposed with the delegates assent that the recommendation of the Agenda Committee by consensus. No objection was heard.

### 5. PROPOSED PRONOUNCEMENT "RENEWED BY GOD'S SPIRIT: AFFIRMING GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER IN THE LIFE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST"

Assistant Moderator MacDonald called on the Rev. Susan A. Henderson (NH) and Mr. Joshua Knight (OHIO), Co-chairs of Committee One, to present the recommended action from that Committee.

Ms. Henderson thanked those who had facilitated the Committee's work. She directed the delegates to the packet containing the Pronouncement. She shared some of the history of the development of this work. Ms. Henderson also explained the changes that Committee One made in the original document.

Mr. Knight continued the report of the Committee stating that

Committee One felt excited, challenged and inspired by this pronouncement. On behalf of the Committee, Mr. Knight moved the adoption of the Pronouncement "Renewed by God's Spirit: Affirming God's Presence and Power in the Life of the United Church of Christ."

Assistant Moderator MacDonald asked for discussion.

The Rev. Wanda D. Craner (PSE) of the Spiritual Development Network of the United Church of Christ spoke in favor of the Pronouncement.

There was no additional discussion. Assistant Moderator MacDonald indicated that a two-thirds majority vote was necessary to pass this pronouncement.

97-GS-35 VOTED: The Twenty-first General Synod adopts the Pronouncement "Renewed by God's Spirit: Affirming God's Presence and Power in the Life of the United Church of Christ."

### PRONOUNCEMENT "RENEWED BY GOD'S SPIRIT: AFFIRMING GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER IN THE LIFE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST"

A Pronouncement inviting the United Church of Christ to identify, affirm and practice the rich diversity of spiritual disciplines among our members for the revival of personal faith, local church life and mission.

#### I. SUMMARY

Believing that the church must interpret and proclaim the gospel afresh in every age, this pronouncement recognizes an urgent calling for the United Church of Christ to identify, affirm and practice anew spiritual disciplines through which God has enlivened the diverse cultures and races comprising this denomination.

The urgency is created by the pervasive search in our culture, even within the church, for spiritual meaning and rootedness. The urgency is created by the perceived loss of moral courage and direction in our society. The urgency is created by new opportunities for the Christian gospel to be proclaimed in fresh language and compelling action.

The United Church of Christ is uniquely gifted for vital faith and mission in this new context. Central to our identity is diversity in unity, "that they may all be one." Claiming our multicultural, multiracial identity means more than coexisting. It means opening ourselves to experience and being influenced by the rich heritages among us. We trust that God intends our diversity to be enriching.

This pronouncement proposes that renewed practice and sharing of our rich spiritual heritages will revitalize local congregations, even the whole church, to do the evangelism and mission needed for today.

#### II. BACKGROUND

Local church membership has declined, partly due to the decline in birth rate, but also because the church has been ill-

## MONDAY EVENING

equipped to reinterpret the gospel in the face of contemporary competing values. Local church members experience more demands on their time. Church school participation by children, youth and adults has declined. The church is competing with many more choices by our own members for their volunteer time and resources. In this context, the church, too often, has been unable to voice the compelling call of the gospel. Many households neglect the basic practices that nurture faith - daily prayer, shared devotional life, regular bible reading and study. We have become too busy and impatient to attend to God's presence in our daily lives. We have neglected God's word, and many are now unfamiliar with our own faith stories. Such neglect has weakened the church for its evangelical task, and diminished the church's moral leadership in our culture.

Yet the longing for spiritual meaning and rootedness is pervasive. Among our own members there are very diverse and intense needs for basic teaching and nurturing. The strong desire to be fed creates an indiscriminating appetite. The church in this time is vulnerable to many "winds of doctrine," many distortions of the Christian story. There are many ready to take easy advantage of spiritual appetites. Yet cultivating personal and corporate faith is more work. It requires sustained, intimate relationships, devotion to scripture and prayer.

### III. THEOLOGICAL, BIBLICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

We believe the church's vitality is God's presence and guidance in worship, in mission and in daily life. We believe God speaks to persons through diverse experiences as evidenced throughout the history of the church: through insight from reading and study, through action for justice and peace, through meditation and prayer and through personal reflection and transformation. We are careful to affirm that we do not limit God's freedom to reveal God's will and word. Yet we also realize that unless we are disciplined in our attentiveness, we can overlook the source of life in our midst.

Throughout the church's history, awareness of God's presence has required both personal and corporate disciplines. Regular worship, sharing the sacraments, group study and sharing of faith stories, corporate prayer and shared mission witnessing to the present and coming reign of God -- all are essential elements of being the church. All involve both personal and corporate practices. All have their roots in the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ, the meaning of his life, death and resurrection. All are essential elements in the continuation of Jesus' ministry through the church. All have received unique shape and flavor in the diverse cultural experiences comprising the United Church of Christ.

To be a disciple means, in part, to submit to a discipline. For Jesus' disciples, following meant submitting to Jesus' own teaching, praying with him, joining his healing ministry and welcoming outcasts and sinners as he did. Jesus did not ignore temple and synagogue practices, he redefined them to bring God's reign near and show it to be radically inclusive. We have glimpses of disciplines in the early church as well.

In Acts we have the testimony of personal and corporate disciplines - sharing resources, devotion to prayer and teaching, compassion for the poor and widowed and breaking bread together. Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus is just as timely for us today: "I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:16-19 NRSV)

### IV. STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION

God calls the church to proclaim the gospel in our day with power in word and deed. We, the United Church of Christ, renew our attentiveness to God's presence among us through both personal and corporate spiritual disciplines. Our personal and corporate experience of the costs and joys of discipleship leads us to identify, affirm, teach, share, and practice the diversity of spiritual disciplines inherent in the body of Christ. Growing in wisdom and grace we work together for the common good, that all may be one in Christ.

### 6. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION "RENEWED BY GOD'S SPIRIT: AFFIRMING GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER IN THE LIFE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST"

Assistant Moderator MacDonald called for discussion of the Proposal for Action.

Ms. Henderson moved the adoption of the Proposal for Action "Renewed by God's Spirit: Affirming God's Presence and Power in the Life of the United Church of Christ."

Wes Bixby (IOWA) stated his support for the Proposal for Action. He cautioned that we be sure we are not just talking in theory and that what is produced for the churches really does help them. Specifically, he asked that we make sure that our rural churches in Iowa, where diversity may not be as plentiful as in big city churches that the material are as useful and spirit filled as this document is calling for.

Ms. Almeda Lahr-Well of the Business Committee moved to amend the Proposal for Action: insert in the Directional Statement and in the Implementation Section, after the introductory phrases "This pronouncement calls" and "The Twenty-first General Synod calls" the words "upon every setting of the United Church of Christ to revival to discover the electrifying presence, power and guidance of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in our world and our lives" and an additional "and" before "to rediscover" in the Implementation Section.

Mr. Raymond Jackowski (PC) spoke against the amendment, expressing concerns about the language.

There was no additional discussion.

The amendment was defeated.