

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Mr. Clifford John (United Black Christians) reminded delegates of the 150th Anniversary of the American Missionary Association and the Board for Homeland Ministries' support of black colleges.

The Rev. James H. Smelley (SC) alerted delegates to remember Campus Ministries which are changing.

The Rev. Gene L. McCornack (MICH) requested that delegates boycott Gannet papers for their role in the consolidation of newspapers in Detroit.

Mr. Ken Stewart (KO) stated his appreciation of the delegates for the important decisions made during the Synod and the spirit in which business was conducted.

Moderator Dean thanked all those who participated in the "Speak Out!" and also thanked Mr. Dick Sparrow for his work as Coordinator of Speak Out!

4. APPRECIATION TO THE REV. ROBERT D. WITHAM

Moderator Dean called upon President Paul Sherry who recognized and commended the Rev. Robert D. Witham for his work in coordinating the process of bringing the Amendments to the Constitution to the Twenty-first General Synod and for his ongoing work with the Transition Coordinating Committee.

The delegates expressed their appreciation to Mr. Witham with a standing ovation.

5. POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

The Moderator recognized Ms. Billie Louise Benson, National Committee on Persons with Disabilities, who expressed concern about the need for greater sensitivity to persons with disabilities when serving communion at the worship service.

6. RESOLUTION "JERUSALEM CITY OF LIFE"

Moderator Dean called on Ms. Sonia Baker (CAL.S), Chair of Committee Four, for their report.

Ms. Baker thanked the members of the Committee Four and those who assisted them with their work. She then reviewed the items of business assigned to the Committee. Ms. Baker spoke about the work of the Committee and moved the adoption of the Resolution "Jerusalem City of Life." Ms. Baker spoke to the Resolution.

Mr. Hugh C. McLean (CONN) spoke in support of the Resolution.

The Rev. Ronald T. Evans (CONN) asked if the intent of the Resolution was, in any way, an intent to give emphasis to the notion of Jerusalem being declared the Capital of Israel. Ms. Baker stated that the Committee emphasized theological points about Jerusalem, not political points.

Moderator Dean called for the vote.

97-GS-51 VOTED: The Twenty-first General Synod adopts the Resolution "Jerusalem: City Of Life."

RESOLUTION "JERUSALEM: CITY OF LIFE"

WHEREAS, the 1980 National Council of Churches Middle East Policy Statement affirmed in 1981 at the General Assembly (Christian Church, Disciples of Christ) and the General Synod (the United Church of Christ) stated that the issue of Jerusalem was an issue not only of shrines, but also of people;

WHEREAS, the peace of Jerusalem is inseparable from the extension of justice to all of its people;

WHEREAS, the peace in Jerusalem, for which we pray, is a peace for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike;

WHEREAS, in March 1995, Paul H. Sherry, President of the United Church of Christ, and Richard L. Hamm, the President and General Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), affirmed the appeal to U.S. President Bill Clinton by eight US Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant church leaders that the U.S. take initiative to insure that the future of Jerusalem not be preempted by the actions of any one party;

WHEREAS, the November 18-20, 1996 meeting of the Common Global Ministries Board unanimously requested the 1997 General Synod (UCC) and the General Assembly (Disciples) to take further action on the issue of Jerusalem;

WHEREAS, on December 21, 1996, Presidents Paul H. Sherry and Richard L. Hamm joined over 600 other Christian leaders in signing an ecumenical full page advertisement in the *New York Times* that declared support, as Christians, for a negotiated solution for Jerusalem that respects the human and political rights of both Palestinians and Israelis, as well as the rights of the three religious communities of the city;

WHEREAS, in December 1996, the President of the United Church of Christ, Paul H. Sherry, and the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Richard L. Hamm, issued pastoral letters about Jerusalem to the churches as follow up to the action of the Common Global Ministries Board; and

WHEREAS, Presidents Paul H. Sherry and Richard L. Hamm have sought an appointment with President Bill Clinton to express concerns about Jerusalem and the need for a consistent strong stand by the United States, in accord with the terms of this resolution;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ, in collaboration with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) should: 1) examine our theological understanding of the significance of Jerusalem and 2) deepen our relations with Jews, Muslims and Palestinian Christians locally and internationally;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ, in collaboration with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), encourages our members to seek dialogue with

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

people of diverse faiths and cultures in their practice of tourism and pilgrimages in and to the Holy Land; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ joins in affirming the text of the December 21, 1996, Churches for Middle East Peace statement *Heritage, Hope and Home of Two Peoples and Three Religions*.

7. RESOLUTION "PALESTINE/ISRAEL"

Moderator Dean asked Ms. Baker to continue with the second item of business from Committee Four. Ms. Baker called the attention of the delegates to the Resolution "Palestine / Israel." She assisted delegates in locating the materials and highlighted several points in the background material. Ms. Baker moved the adoption of the Resolution and spoke to the motion.

Moderator Dean asked for discussion.

The Rev. Gordon M. Forbes (CAC) and the Rev. Zoltan Szucs (CA.SY) spoke in support of the Resolution and urged the support of delegates.

The Rev. Alfred C. Krass (PSE) said he supported the Resolution but would have difficulty using it at home in his relationships with Jewish persons and Muslims. He expressed concern about the beginning of the first sentence in the Introduction and offered a friendly amendment to replace the words "the true" with the words "an important part."

This was accepted as a friendly amendment.

There was no additional discussion and Moderator called for the vote.

97-GS-52 VOTED: The Twenty-First General Synod adopts the Resolution "Palestine / Israel."

RESOLUTION "PALESTINE\ISRAEL"

Introduction:

An important part of the significance of the Holy Land to Christians lies in the living communities of Christians who dwell there. This resolution calls for support of Palestinian Christians in Israel\Palestine, and for recognition of the suffering of all people living there. It affirms that the wounds of the past must not overcome the opportunities for peace in the present.

Theological Rationale:

The Christian Church began in Jerusalem and Jerusalem has served as a spiritual image of a new community gathered in peace where the love of God shall reign. The writer of the Revelation of St. John writes:

I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband ... He will wipe every tear from their eye, Death shall be no more; mourning and crying and pain shall be no more, for the first things have passed away. (Rev.21:2,4)

The city remains a place of pilgrimage and spiritual renewal where scripture, read in the land where it was written, exudes a special aura of authenticity.

Background:

Many Palestinian Christians trace their roots to the first church -- the Jerusalem church. Through the centuries Christians have preserved the holy sites.

Palestinian Christians make up an educated and skilled portion of the Palestinian population often managing schools, hospitals and health clinics open to all. They have persisted in their witness despite invasions, conquests, oppression, and persecutions over the past two thousand years.

Palestinian Christians are a diminishing minority in the Holy Land. Economic uncertainty, deteriorating living conditions, and oppressive violations of human and civil rights have driven them from their land. Constituting 25% of the population of Israel\Palestine in 1900, Christians now comprise 2-3% because of the severity of occupation.

Palestinian Christians call upon the international Christian community for help. In a 1996 conference in Jerusalem attended by 200 Christian leaders from all continents and 30 countries, Palestinian Christians again alerted the international Christian community to their plight and requested advocacy for their concerns.

WHEREAS, the Nineteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ has affirmed that unilateral action regarding the sovereignty of Jerusalem only perpetuates antagonisms and threatens the peace of the region;

WHEREAS, Christians in convention in Jerusalem, in January of 1996, supported Palestinian Christians in their petition to the government of Israel to provide free access to Jerusalem for all; to cease expropriating land and expanding settlements; and to support equal housing rights for Palestinians within the city of Jerusalem;

WHEREAS, closure of Jerusalem to Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza separates most Palestinians from the center of their economic, cultural, and political life and prevents most Palestinian Christians and Muslims from worshipping at their holy sites;

WHEREAS, Christians in Bethlehem have had their land confiscated for the building of Israeli settlements and the roads servicing them, which also threatens sacred and historic sites;

WHEREAS, violation of human and civil rights, the use of coercion, and terrorist acts by any party perpetuate an escalating cycle of violence; and

WHEREAS, pertinent United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 181, placing Jerusalem under a special international regime, have not been implemented;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-first General Synod of the United Church of Christ supports Palestinian Christians in their insistence that: