

## MONDAY MORNING

WHEREAS, the General Synod process does provide a means for local churches to communicate their critical responses to each pronouncement and proposal for action to the appropriate committee of the General Synod; and

WHEREAS, the General Synod does not provide such a process for resolutions of witness, prudential resolutions and other formal motions mailed to delegates in advance of the General Synod;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges the Executive Council to develop a mechanism by which local churches can respond to the resolutions that will be submitted to the Twenty-third General Synod. This mechanism will seek to honor the voice of the churches even as it honors the deliberations of those gathered delegates who are empowered to act.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

### 17. RESOLUTION "REDRESSING THE EFFECTS OF 1996 WELFARE LEGISLATION"

Mr. Biebighauser introduced the Resolution "Redressing the Effects of 1996 Welfare Legislation" and on behalf of Committee 12 moved its adoption. He explained that the Committee had only positive conversation on the intent of this resolution; however the Committee did make some changes. Mr. Biebighauser reviewed the changes made by the Committee.

There was discussion and questions for clarification were asked and answered.

Mr. Tony D. Lewis (CA NV,N) offered a friendly amendment that following the first "THEREFORE" insert the words, "including those" following families to read "which would assist low income families including those with one or more members employed."

This amendment was accepted as friendly.

Rev. Zoltan D. Szucs (CA.SY) offered a friendly amendment, that in the previously added editorial paragraph add "ethnic origin" just before the word "gender" so the statement reads "race, class, ethnic origin, gender and disability."

This amendment was accepted as friendly.

Mr. Drew Carouthers (WIS) raised a concern about using the word "including" because the original intention was to state that welfare reform has not worked the way we would like it to. He said that one of the things about welfare reform he liked was that it attempts to help people who are trying to help themselves. While supporting race, class, ethnic origin, gender and disability issues, he urged retention of the original wording, "one or more members employed."

There being no more discussion, the Assistant Moderator called for the vote on the motion.

99-GS-33 VOTED: The Twenty-second General Synod adopts the resolution on "Redressing the Effects of 1996 Welfare Legislation."

### REDRESSING THE EFFECTS OF 1996 WELFARE LEGISLATION

WHEREAS, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which replaced Aid for Families with Dependent Children, is now systematically being terminated, according to the specific plan of each state, for families not meeting work requirements within two years of receiving benefits, increasing poverty, hunger, homelessness and lack of child and health care for affected households;

WHEREAS, even among families which have succeeded in meeting the established work requirements, fewer than 24 percent are receiving a level of pay sufficient to raise them above the poverty line for a family of three, and 56 percent are receiving incomes less than three-fourths of the poverty line;

WHEREAS, such earnings are too low to provide the supports which are necessary in order for parents to sustain their employment, particularly child care and transportation, and co-payment requirements to receive assistance are too high (so that in Pennsylvania, for instance, co-payments for child care have increased by 200 percent for families at 80 to 90 percent of the federal poverty level);

WHEREAS, the provisions of the 1996 PRWORA for exemptions from termination of benefits is insufficient to serve the number of families in need of exemption in many states;

WHEREAS, the impact of these policies and practices is especially severe on families with children, above all, mentally and developmentally challenged children, as well as families with unanticipated health care crises and victims of domestic violence, whose nutrition, education, health and family life are adversely affected

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by the consequent hardships and lack of access to resources;

WHEREAS, the needs and suffering generated by these conditions are too often treated as acceptable consequences by legislators and implementing governmental agencies, ignored by Americans with more adequate incomes, and all too often ignored also by the church;

WHEREAS, the dismantling of federal oversight and the transfer of power and responsibility to the states has led to an inability to adequately measure and track the results of welfare change, and particularly has led to some former beneficiaries "disappearing" in the sense of being neither employed nor receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits, perhaps indicating tragic circumstances for individuals and a failure of the TANF program;

WHEREAS, many persons continue to be disadvantaged by prejudice and institutionalized oppression based on race, class, ethnic origin, gender and disability;

WHEREAS, attempts of public, private, religious and other non-profit sectors to increase the provision of such supports, particularly child care, transportation, and ultimately homelessness prevention, have not come near to keeping pace with the needs;

WHEREAS, according to Second Harvest, the largest organization of food banks and soup kitchens in the USA, the number of persons depending upon these sources of food now exceeds 21 million persons per week;

WHEREAS, the Twenty-first Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted a resolution calling upon its instrumentalities and agencies, conferences, associations, local churches and covenanted institutions to study, monitor and take appropriate action to support the benefits and counter the adverse effects of the 1996 federal and state welfare "reform" enactments;

WHEREAS, General Synod 16 affirmed the pronouncement "Fulfilling the Covenant With All God's Children" and General Synod 17 affirmed the pronouncement "Christian Faith: Economic Life and Justice", and General Synods 6, 9, 10, 11, and 13 affirmed resolutions supporting improvements in the provision of welfare; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ Welfare Working Group, convened by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries and the Office for Church in

Society, has collaborated with the Family Income Division of the Children's Defense Fund in drafting a legislative proposal entitled, "The Right Balance: Helping Families Who Work to Escape Poverty While Preserving the Safety Net for Families with Children Unable to Support Themselves Through Work" which calls for federal legislative action to address three major problems:

- 1) the gap between wages and the poverty level;
- 2) the increasing gap between the numbers of exemptions allowed and needed; and
- 3) the health, developmental and educational problems of children in families who have been terminated;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon all expressions of the United Church of Christ to advocate for policies which would assist low income families including those with one or more members employed in the following ways:

improve formulas concerning the provision of welfare assistance in addition to employment income so that benefits do not drastically decline as income from employment increases;

increase the minimum wage and provide living wages for workers;

provide regular employment with adequate pay and benefits including full employee rights and protections;

provide education, training, and substance abuse rehabilitation when necessary to improve the employability and to support beneficiaries in the contributions they make to the common good;

provide access to child care, food stamps, health care, subsidized housing, and transportation support;

increase the amount of child support that is passed through to the family from the government; and

increase federal and state earned income tax credit.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod calls upon all expressions of the United Church of Christ to engage in advocacy to take full advantage of new opportunities to promote the goals listed above and to oppose all restrictions and limitations by states or local governments which restrict or oppress beneficiaries of TANF.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod calls upon the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, the Office for Church in Society, the Commission for Racial Justice, the Coordinating Center for Women, and, upon its creation, Justice and Witness Ministries to develop staff, program and other resources that will enable and empower all settings of the United Church of Christ to be effective advocates to federal and state legislatures; and calls upon all expressions of the United Church of Christ to become servants to and advocates for persons who for various reasons will continue to need assistance.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod requests the Justice and Witness Ministries to submit a detailed report of the implementation of this resolution to the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ in 2001.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

### **18. RESOLUTION "BRINGING JUSTICE AND PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST"**

Assistant Moderator Frieberg called on Rev. Susan P. Townsley, Chair of Committee Six, for two pieces of business.

Ms. Townsley directed the delegates to the Resolution "Bringing Justice and Peace to the Middle East" and, on behalf of Committee Six, moved its adoption.

Rev. Sharon K. Prestemon (WIS) shared that just days before General Synod began she returned from a brief time of service/study in Israel/Palestine. She shared observations from her trip and urged passage of this resolution.

Rev. Eric Kirkegaard (WIS) offered a friendly amendment adding to the first paragraph of the "Be it resolved" the words "non-violent" in the sentence which then would read in part, "to use financial resources in non-violent ways that deter development of Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas."

The Committee accepted this as a friendly amendment.

Rev. Deanna J. Lewis (KO) spoke as a member of Committee 6 stating the Committee's commitment to be sure that both the Israelis and Palestinians would be monitored according to this resolution and that there would be justice and fairness to all parties involved.

Other persons spoke in support of the resolution.

Rev. William E. Miles (WIS) moved the previous question.

99-GS-34 VOTED: The Twenty-second General Synod votes to close debate.

99-GS-35 VOTED: The Twenty-second General Synod adopts the Resolution "Bringing Justice and Peace to the Middle East."

### **BRINGING JUSTICE AND PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the Executive and Legislative branches of the United States Government to monitor closely types of aid to the State of Israel and Palestinian areas, to use financial resources in non-violent ways that deter development of Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas, and to use financial resources to promote peace and justice for both Israelis and Palestinians.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the Executive and Legislative branches of the United States Government to provide funding to rebuild infrastructure and homes for the Palestinian people.

FINALLY, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the covenanted ministries of Justice and Witness, and Wider Church to publish articles regularly in United Church of Christ publications which give balanced reports of events in Israel and Palestinian areas.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

### **19. ORDER OF THE DAY, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND RECESS**

The Assistant Moderator called the Order of the Day. He called on Secretary Guffey for announcements and declared that, following announcements, Synod would be in recess until 2:30 PM.