

MONDAY AFTERNOON

moments to contemplate what is going on in rural America.

Ms. Irma E. Romero (ILL) spoke on behalf of our sister, Alejandrina Torres, who is still a prisoner of conscience after 19 years because Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States, and also our brother who is one more prisoner of conscience. She urged delegates to be aware and sign the petition to President Clinton to free the prisoners of conscience.

The Moderator thanked the Speak Out! participants and reminded delegates that the next Speak Out! would be during the next plenary.

3. LETTER TO THE GENERAL SYNOD FROM PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Moderator Hood called on Rev. Paul H. Sherry for a moment of Presidential Privilege.

Mr. Sherry read a letter to the General Synod from the President of the United States, William J. Clinton. The letter expressed thanks for the ongoing work of the church to make our country stronger. Mr. Clinton expressed gratitude for the commitment of the United Church of Christ to improve the lives of children and stated there is much more to be done to insure that every child has the opportunity to live up to his or her God-given potential. He expressed gratitude to the United Church of Christ for confronting these issues. *(The complete text of President Clinton's letter is located in Appendix B.)*

4. RESOLUTION "IN SOLIDARITY WITH VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION"

The Moderator recognized Rev. Susan P. Townsley (CONN), Chair of Committee Six, to continue the report of that committee.

Ms. Townsley directed the delegates to the resolution entitled "In Solidarity With Victims of Religious Persecution" and moved its adoption. Ms. Townsley spoke to the resolution and explained that the committee struggled with how to be specific in our support for persecuted Christians without being exclusive and concerned solely for those who share our faith.

Discussion followed.

Rev. William S. Chote (CA NV,N) spoke in favor stating that we are all concerned about persecution of Christians around the world and he is especially concerned for over 300,000 new Christians in Northern India who daily face persecution born of a vicious caste

system and the political turmoil of a rising Hindu fundamentalism.

Rev. William E. Miles (WIS) stated that in order to make the background material consistent with the resolution the following changes needed to be made: In the second sentence of the Background material delete the words "of the church and her leaders" and replace with the words "of people of faith and their leaders" so the sentence reads "Organized persecution of people of faith and their leaders is a rising. . . ." and in the last sentence delete the words "churches under" and change "persecution" to "persecuted" so the sentence reads "Some of those persecuted are. . . ."

The committee accepted this as a friendly amendment.

99-GS-36 VOTED: The Twenty-second General Synod adopts the Resolution "In Solidarity with Victims of Religious Persecution."

IN SOLIDARITY WITH VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

WHEREAS, Christians and people of other faith expressions continue to be martyred for their faith in the 20th century and organized persecution, including rape, murder, false prosecution, and destruction of property, has arisen in several countries with the overt or passive assent of the government;

WHEREAS, this persecution has impacted sister churches with whom we are in partnership and takes place in nations whose governments are supported by the United States; and

WHEREAS, we believe that all people are created and loved by God, and that if any suffer, all suffer;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the instrumentalities and their successors, conferences, associations, and local churches of the United Church of Christ to listen to the voices of our partners in faith in their need for appropriate intercession, and to stand in solidarity with Christians and people of other faith expressions by reporting acts of violence and oppression against those persons; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod encourages instrumentalities and their successors, conferences, associations, and local churches of the United Church of Christ to protest the plight of oppressed Christians and other victims of religious persecutions to their respective governments, and to support U.S. legislation and government policy

MONDAY AFTERNOON

toward other governments that reward religious freedom and discourage religious tyranny and persecution.

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

Moderator Hood reminded the Synod of the time constraints and that any unfinished business at the end of Synod will go to the Executive Council.

5. RESOLUTION "DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ALLIANCE OF BAPTISTS AND THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST"

The Moderator called on Ms. Frances Carreon (MO), Chair of Committee Five, for recommended actions.

Ms. Carreon directed the delegates to page 132 in the Program/Worship and Business book for the Resolution "Dialogue Between the Alliance of Baptists and the United Church of Christ." She thanked the members of Committee Five for their work, especially those individuals who provided personal witness to their work with the Alliance of Baptists. Ms. Carreon shared the positive feeling of the Committee and moved its receipt and adoption of the recommended actions.

Discussion followed.

Rev. Yoshikuni Kanda (SC) expressed his pleasure to support this resolution with passion. He explained that recently delegates from their partner church in Okinawa Japan were in Austin and he approached their immediate neighbor church to hold a global worship service on Sunday morning. However, the church said "No" because of their fear regarding the huge military bases there. He approached a nearby University Baptist Church and they said "Yes" immediately. There was a great worship service with the Okinawa pastor preaching and the joint choir singing. This Baptist church was removed from the Southern Baptist Convention two years ago because the church ordained a gay member as a Deacon.

Rev. Timothy C. Downs (SE) spoke with enthusiasm on behalf of this resolution. The kinds of issues that have separated these churches from the Southern Baptists are the kinds of issues that are important to us in the United Church of Christ: inclusion of women in ministry and inclusion of gay, lesbian and transgendered peoples. He stated that the Alliance of Baptists preaches a gospel that reconciles, frees and unites. He urged support and welcomes a dialogue with sisters and brothers in Christ who have been very

important to us in the South and with whom we share a great deal.

Rev. Dorothy Gager (SE) stated that as a resident of Nashville, the home of the Southern Baptist National Offices, she has known many life-long Baptists who are deeply committed to the idea of a church with congregational based polity which invites its members to think for themselves about matters of scripture and social justice. She reported that these people have found themselves excluded from teaching positions in church-related seminaries and from pulpits in their denomination; their pain is palpable. Our predecessors in the faith did a great injustice to their predecessors in the faith and we now have the opportunity to right that wrong. She urged support of the resolution.

There being no further discussion, Moderator Hood called for the vote.

99-GS-37 VOTED: The Twenty-second General Synod receives the report "Dialogue Between the Alliance of Baptists and the United Church of Christ" and adopts the recommended action.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ALLIANCE OF BAPTISTS AND THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WHEREAS, the Alliance of Baptists has been a faithful witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ;

WHEREAS, a two-year consultation process between leaders of the Alliance and the United Church of Christ has revealed significant shared theological convictions as well as potential opportunities for mutual support in common mission; and

WHEREAS, this consultation has identified important issues requiring further exploration;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ authorizes a formal dialogue between the United Church of Christ and the Alliance of Baptists;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the President of the United Church of Christ, in consultation with the Council for Ecumenism, name a dialogue team to meet with counterparts from the Alliance of Baptists to explore a possible future ecumenical relationship between the two bodies; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the President be requested to report the recommendations of this