

Rev. Rollin O. Russell as he leaves for a new position at Lancaster Theological Seminary.

Mr. Richard Conser (ILL) asked that all lawyers jokes be discontinued and reported that the United Church of Christ Attorney's Network is being formed under the auspices of the American Missionary Association. He explained this is a separate group from the group of attorneys serving conferences and churches. This network is organized to address issues within the 19 issues identified by the Justice and Peace Network. For information contact Rev. Dr. Allison Phillips through the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries.

Ms. Beverly Brindle (RI) on behalf of the New England Conference on Mission Planning Committee invited all attending Synod to attend and participate in the First New England Conference on Mission of the new century - NECOM 2000. This is an intergenerational, five day event from July 31 to August 4, 2000 inclusive of all in the family and taking place at the Geneva Point Center on the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. The theme for the next year is "Towards oneness, joining heart and hands."

Rev. Joanne M. Graves (MASS) reported on the crisis dealing with the amount of debt incurred by ministers while they are training for the ministry. She identified the report on the state of indebtedness of those recently ordained and encouraged support of seminaries. She and suggested adopting a seminarian from your association or conference if your church doesn't have one of its own stating that the future health of our churches is at stake.

Ms. Terry Yasuko Ogawa (SE) described Project Oikos, which began three years ago with 16 young adults from Germany, Canada, the Philippines and the United States spending nine months together studying issues of justice. She encouraged financial support for youth and young adult programs.

Assistant Moderator Frieberg thanked the speakers for their contribution and announced the final Speak Out! will be during the Eleventh Plenary.

The Assistant Moderator invited Ms. Susan M. Sanders to report on the Volunteer Service Projects that were held on Saturday.

### 3. VOLUNTEER SERVICE PROJECTS

Ms. Sanders reported people from ages 10 to 72 painted a new shelter for homeless teens, dug trenches and set footings for a three-family Habitat for Humanity house, filled ditty bags and delivered them to a crew of Filipino Seafarers. Others painted fences, cut weeds, beautified a cemetery, engaged residents in a Providence neighborhood, sorted food, assembled

health kits for Church World Service, and even donated their own blood so that others may live. Thanks be to God for the opportunity to serve.

Assistant Moderator Frieberg thanked Ms. Sanders and all who participated in the service projects.

### 4. RESOLUTION "ACCESS TO HEALTH, DENTAL, AND DISABILITY INSURANCE FOR UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CLERGY AND LAY EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES"

The Assistant Moderator called on the Chair of Committee Two, Rev. Bienvenida V. Sevilleja.

Ms. Bennie Sevilleja directed the delegates to the Resolution "Access to Health, Dental, and Disability Insurance for United Church of Christ Clergy and Lay Employees and Their Families" and moved its adoption.

Ms. Sevilleja spoke to the motion and thanked Vermont and the Florida Conferences for raising the issues and she thanked the resource persons for Committee Two. Ms. Sevilleja stated that the Committee recognized the complexity of these issues and of the larger context of health care accessibility in the United States. They addressed the two major issues of eligibility and competitiveness as limiting access to the United Church of Christ health, dental and disability plans.

The Committee acknowledges the pain and confusion arising from lack of affordability and lack of awareness regarding our health, dental and disability plans.

Ms. Sevilleja continued stating that The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ is responsible for administering pensions and allied benefit plans such as health, dental and disability insurance for United Church of Christ clergy and lay employees and their families. These benefits are governed by a board of trustees elected by its members and responsible solely to the members. Therefore, in its relationship with the General Synod the Synod requests actions of the Pension Boards which as a recognized instrumentality covenanting with the United Church of Christ and it takes seriously any requests made. The health care plan depends upon the participation of all, it is advantageous from all perspectives to promote access to clergy, lay employees and their families. Ms. Sevilleja stated that the Committee holds in high regard the covenantal nature of our relationships within the health care plan. She said the Committee also wished to emphasize the responsibility of all of those involved at all levels, the conferences, churches and employees, to be fully informed of options and consequences as they make decisions which have long-term implications

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for themselves and for those with whom they have covenanted.

Assistant Moderator Frieberg called for discussion.

Rev. Gerald Bortsch (WIS) spoke on behalf of the Wisconsin Conference stating they have prepared what they believe to be a friendly amendment. The amendment is to be added after the last "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED." A new paragraph as follows: "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod urge all Conferences to be enrolled in The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ's insurance and pension programs, and all congregations be encouraged and supported by their conferences to enable 100% enrollment of eligible church employees."

The Committee did not accept this as a friendly amendment.

Mr. Bortsch spoke to the amendment stating that the Wisconsin Conference feels strongly about this because they think "that the rubber hits the road" on this issue not on access but on participation. About five or six years ago the Wisconsin Conference converted to the national program and their participants have received many benefits as well as others in the program, by adding to the broader base of participation.

There being no one to speak against the amendment the Assistant Moderator closed debate and called for the vote.

99-GS-49 VOTED The Twenty-second General Synod adds an additional paragraph after the last "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED" to read "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod urges all conferences to be enrolled in The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ insurance and pension programs, and all congregations be encouraged and supported by their conferences to enable 100% enrollment of eligible church employees.

The Assistant Moderator asked for further discussion on the main motion.

Rev. Ann Marie Coleman (ILL) reported that the Illinois delegates met with Joan Brannick of The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ to talk about this resolution and other related questions. Ms. Coleman spoke in support of the resolution, but also pointed out that many of our continued concerns have to do with the need for universal access to health care. She stated that since we do not now have that access our churches continue to face increases in the cost of

our plan. Ms. Coleman urged all to remember the connection by voting for this resolution and by continuing to work for universal access to health care.

Assistant Moderator Frieberg, seeing no one to speak against the resolution, closed debate and called for the vote.

99-GS-50 VOTED: The Twenty-second General Synod adopts the Resolution "Access to Health, Dental, and Disability Insurance for United Church of Christ Clergy and Lay Employees and Their Families" as amended.

### ACCESS TO HEALTH, DENTAL, AND DISABILITY INSURANCE FOR UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CLERGY AND LAY EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ, through its General Synod, Board for Homeland Ministries, Office for Church and Society, as well as many of its Conferences, Associations and local churches, has long advocated for adequate and equitable medical care for all Americans, regardless of their income level or individual disabilities;

WHEREAS, The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ offer medical, dental and disability insurance programs designed to serve the needs of the ordained clergy and lay employees in the United Church of Christ;

WHEREAS, congregations are expected to provide such insurance as a benefit of employment for all pastors and many lay employees;

WHEREAS, The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ have established a very limited open enrollment period for this insurance in the absence of "proof of incurability," specifically a period of 90 days following the initial employment of a person in his or her first place of ministry in the United Church of Christ;

WHEREAS, a number of United Church of Christ clergy and lay employees and/or their families have been denied insurance coverage because they failed to apply for coverage within this 90 day period, either because their employer did not offer to pay for such coverage, or because coverage was available from another source; and

WHEREAS, "proof of incurability" has often been denied on the basis of a history of relatively minor medical problems and/or problems not likely to recur in the future, under standards set by The Pension

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Boards—United Church of Christ under their contract with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company as the "gatekeeper" for these insurance programs;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ convey its strong concern about access to health, dental, and disability insurance for United Church of Christ clergy and lay employees and their families to The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ, the Executive Council, and all other settings of the United Church of Christ;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod encourage all settings of the church - national, conferences, associations, and local churches - to advocate for and interpret the rules of the United Church of Christ health, dental, and disability plans to all eligible; and to assist churches in exploring options for funding their employees' United Church of Christ health, dental, and disability plans;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod requests The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ to review the enrollment rules for their health, dental, and disability insurance plans and to continue to investigate the impact of permitting open enrollment without "proof of incurability" for a period of 90 days following the beginning of employment of clergy and lay employees in any new position or setting of ministry, and to report to the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod urges all Conferences to be enrolled in The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ insurance and pension programs, and all congregations be encouraged and supported by their conferences to enable 100% enrollment of eligible church employees; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests that The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ continue to examine the impact of changing policies regarding medical histories and "preexisting conditions" in relation to eligibility for participation in the United Church of Christ health, dental and disability plans with a view toward making these plans more accessible to clergy and lay employees and their families in the United Church of Christ; and request that The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ continue to investigate ways to make these plans more competitive with regard to costs and benefits.

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

### 5. RESOLUTION "OPEN ENROLLMENT IN THE HEALTH CARE AND DENTAL PLANS OF THE PENSION BOARDS—UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST"

Ms. Sevilleja directed the delegates to page 190 in the Program/Worship and Business Book for the Resolution "Open Enrollment in the Health Care and Dental Plans of The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ" and moved its defeat. Ms. Sevilleja yielded her time to Ms. Barbara Van Ausdall (IS).

Ms. Van Ausdall reported that the Committee feels the body should defeat this resolution because the spirit and intention of that resolution has been included in the action just passed. She continued that the Florida delegation also talked about that with the Committee and the Committee felt that due to rising expenses and a myriad of other reasons this resolution needs to be defeated.

The Assistant Moderator called for discussion and seeing none called for the vote.

99-GS-51 VOTED: the Twenty-second General Synod defeats the Resolution "Open Enrollment in the Health Care and Dental Plans of The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ." (*The text of this resolution is located in Appendix D.*)

### 6. PRESENTATION IN SUPPORT OF PUERTO RICAN PRISONERS

Assistant Moderator Frieberg called on Rev. Paul H. Sherry, President of the United Church of Christ for a presentation.

Mr. Sherry gave a brief presentation describing the plight of fifteen Puerto Rican men and women who have been in prison nearly two decades because of their acts and beliefs in favor of independence for Puerto Rico. Mr. Sherry stated that two of the prisoners have a special relationship to the United Church of Christ through their relationship with the First Congregational Church in Chicago. He reminded the delegates of the years the United Church of Christ has supported these prisoners and declared that it is long past time for their release.

Dr. Thomas E. Dipko, Executive Director of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, also described the support these prisoners have received within the United Church of Christ. He stated that all the major