

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

- There are 18 times more gun dealers in California than there are McDonald's,
- There are more restrictions on teddy bears in California than there are on guns;

WHEREAS, guns seem too accessible to children and youth who, lacking the motivation and skills for nonviolent conflict resolution, seem quick to use firearms in situations of personal conflict; and

WHEREAS, firearms are lethally effective tools of violence and are romanticized by a gun culture supported by "entertainment" and fantasy marketed to children and youth;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ:

- Calls upon the United Church of Christ in all its settings to study causes of youth violence and to increase awareness of and resistance to the violence in schools rooted in the extension of cultural attitudes which stereotype, judge, marginalize, and exclude other people.
- Requests the Local Churches, Associations and Conferences of the United Church of Christ, and all United Church of Christ-sponsored camps and youth events to help families, children and youth to understand their differences, expand their range of tolerance for others, resist the influences of violent content in media and entertainment, explore appropriate ways of dealing with anger and frustration and consider the violent effects of loneliness, isolation and persecution.
- Calls upon the United Church of Christ in all its settings to raise the issue of youth violence ecumenically, particularly with, but not limited to, our partner churches, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), The Presbyterian Church (USA), The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Reformed Church in America; and in local interfaith networks; and
- Urges Conferences to call upon state and local governments to enact and enforce laws and policies that secure school campuses from firearms and reduce the access of children and youth to firearms designed primarily for person-on-person violence.
- Calls upon Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, and the national offices, specifically the Justice and Witness Ministries, to implement and support programs to identify companies whose

advertising dollars promote violence and degradation in the media so that the faith community, as a vehicle for positive change, can be in contact with those companies regarding their advertising practices; and

- Calls upon all the investment instruments of the United Church of Christ to identify companies that support a culture of violence, particularly with guns, and to review our investment policies to ensure that United Church of Christ investment policies promote peace and respect for all life.
- Calls upon individual Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, and the national setting, particularly the Justice and Witness Ministry to support and implement programs to train children and youth in skills of non-violent conflict resolution, awareness of and resistance to the effects of violence in fantasy and entertainment, and skills for the counseling and mentoring of peers, including the desire and ability to move as agents of reconciliation among campus groups.

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

The Moderator asked for a moment of Moderator Privilege and asked Rev. Wallace Ryan Kuroiwa, the Executive Director of the Office for Church in Society, to lead the Synod in a time of prayer about the violence in our schools.

4. RESOLUTION "PREVENTION OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH SUICIDE"

Moderator Hood called on Ms. Gilliam to present the second item of business for Committee One.

Ms. Gilliam assisted the delegates in locating the resolution and noted that along with the many delegates, visitors and staff, many youth and young adults came to the Friday hearings to voice their opinions on this issue. She reviewed changes to the original document and moved the adoption of the resolution "Prevention of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Suicide."

The Moderator stated this Committee had exhausted its time but the delegates agreed to an extension of time.

Ms. Gilliam spoke briefly to the resolution stating that the Committee as individuals and as a group recognized and discussed the need to address all youth suicide but

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

chose to deal with the task at hand, that one out of every three teenage suicides is in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. She shared a diary entry of a young man who was gay and had committed suicide.

Rev. Robert C. Hagan (WIS) offered a friendly amendment to the third "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED;" after "The Reformed Church in America" insert the words "in local interfaith networks." The amendment was accepted by the committee as friendly.

Mr. Matthew B. Small (ME), representing the Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, spoke urging the adoption of this resolution stating that our society while far more accepting of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons, is by no means a safe zone. Mr. Small stressed the need for education on issues of acceptance. He challenged the church to begin with this focus on youth suicide and continue the campaign to stop youth suicide.

Mr. Douglas Fauth (PC) offered a friendly amendment to add the words "or when abandoned by their faith communities" to the end of the fifth "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED." This was accepted as a friendly amendment by the Committee Chair.

Rev. Barron P. Barley (PC) asked for clarification from the Committee the reference to "spiritual suicide" and what that means and what was intended by the Committee.

Ms. Gilliam stated that when the Committee wrestled with this concept they were discussing that not only physical suicide occurred. As the diary entries were read they realized that the youth were abandoning their faiths also because their faiths were abandoning them, so spiritual suicide is also experienced.

Ms. Susan Towner-Larsen (OHIO) offered an amendment to the fifth "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED," add the words "reflect on what leads youth to a loss of hope and faith" instead of "commit spiritual suicide by abandoning their faiths." She suggested that the current wording made it sound like leaving faith or having questions about faith is a spiritual suicide. She stated that many youth and young adults have periods in their lives when questioning and doubting is very much a part of growing into faith and she is uncomfortable with current wording. This also was considered "friendly" by the Committee.

Seeing no one to speak against the resolution, Moderator Hood called for the vote.

99-GS-67 VOTED: The Twenty-second General Synod adopts the Resolution "Prevention of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Suicide" as amended.

PREVENTION OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH SUICIDE

WHEREAS, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ has declared itself supportive of youth in the United Church of Christ;

WHEREAS, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ has called upon settings of the church to declare themselves Open and Affirming of gay and lesbian persons; and

WHEREAS, ignorance of, and silence about, youth suicide in general and in particular of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth is present in the United Church of Christ and churches of all denominations and in society in general;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates to the Twenty-second General Synod of the United Church of Christ, meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, July 1-6, 1999, pledge to take actions that will increase awareness of and seriously address youth suicide and the link between youth suicide and sexual or gender identity, by encouraging open discussion of these issues in our families, churches, youth groups, associations, conferences and camps;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries (or its successor body) be requested to conduct a research study analyzing the role of religion in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth suicides and develop resources and educational materials concerning these issues and distribute them for use by local churches, associations, conferences and other settings of the United Church of Christ;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ministries and various settings of the United Church of Christ be strongly encouraged to identify and use, as soon as possible, existing educational materials directed to youth, clergy, parents and laity, which will assist them in understanding:

- 1) youth suicide;
- 2) sexual orientation and gender identity; and
- 3) how the above two issues relate;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ministries of the United Church of Christ in all its settings raise these issues ecumenically, particularly with, but not limited to, our partner churches, The Christian Church

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

(Disciples of Christ), The Presbyterian Church (USA), The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Reformed Church in America, and in local interfaith networks;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ, in all its settings, reflect on what leads youth to a loss of hope and faith;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the ministries and various settings of the United Church of Christ work to make the existence of open and affirming churches known to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youths; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ in all its settings raise these issues with civil authorities, in their community and legislative settings, and with schools and families; and that the Office for Church in Society (or its successor body) facilitate these efforts and advocate in a similar fashion, to ensure that issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth suicide are adequately addressed in society at large.

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

5. CELEBRATION 2000

The Moderator called for a presentation on "Celebration 2000." Ms. Dorothy M. Lester, Office for Church Life and Leadership, spoke about "Celebration 2000" stating that it will be a time to recognize and honor our past and to celebrate the work of the future as the restructure actually happens. She invited the delegates to attend the June 22-25, 2000 event. The presentation was enhanced with a saxophone/piano jazz piece and ended with everyone singing "This Little Light of Mine."

6. RESOLUTION "MEN'S MINISTRY IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST"

Moderator Hood called upon Rev. Dennis L. Frische-Mouri (IK), Chair of Committee Seven, to present the recommended actions from that Committee.

Mr. Frische-Mouri thanked the Indiana-Kentucky delegation and their youth delegation for their support. He directed the delegates to the tan packet, presented the Resolution "Men's Ministry in the United Church of Christ," and moved its adoption.

Mr. Frische-Mouri spoke to the resolution stating there was strong support for the original document and it was felt that there were a couple of issues which, if dealt with, would strengthen the resolution. The first change was to remove the name "brotherhood" from the original document and substitute "men's ministries" as the Committee felt that "brotherhood" was only one manifestation of the historical men's ministries of the United Church of Christ and that the term "men's ministries" might be more inclusive. The second change was in the "THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED" where the phrase "seeking alternatives to relationships based on patriarchy and dominance" was added to recognize that in the past many men often defined themselves by patriarchal roles and moving it from the "WHEREAS" to the "THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED." The Committee stands in affirmation of men's ministries throughout the United Church of Christ and lifts up the hope that men of our churches will find their spiritual journeys nurturing and life-giving.

Rev. Jean E. Rosewall (NOPL), a member of the Committee, stated the Committee was strongly interested and concerned that there be the opportunity for men's ministries. She stated that men's ministries should have similar resourcing that women's ministry has enjoyed, as well as the opportunity to utilize the resources amongst the men of our denomination to develop their program. Ms. Rosewall urged the passage of this resolution.

There being no one to speak in opposition, The Moderator called for the vote.

99-GS-68 VOTED: The Twenty-second General Synod adopts the Resolution "Men's Ministry in the United Church of Christ."

MEN'S MINISTRY IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WHEREAS, men and women are created in the image of God and endowed with personality, gender, race, culture, orientation and spiritual gifts for covenant relationships and service in church and society;

WHEREAS, since the mid-eighties there has been an increasing awareness of the need for men to find healthy ways to relate to one another, with women and with children;

WHEREAS, there is a need to support men as they seek growth in their relationship with God and to discover alternatives to relationships based on patriarchy and dominance;