

RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

[Adopted by the Sixteenth General Synod, United Church of Christ, Cleveland, Ohio, June 25-
July 2, 1987.]

Whereas, we are called as disciples of Jesus Christ to express our love of God through love of ourselves as God's image, in love of neighbor and through the active pursuit of justice; and

Whereas, the Tenth General Synod voted its support for the "enactment of legislation at the federal, state, and local levels of government that would guarantee the liberties of all persons with discrimination related to affectional or sexual preference;" and

Whereas, the Eleventh General Synod urged "congregations, Associations, Conferences and Instrumentalities to work for the discriminalization of private sexual acts between consenting adults"; and

Whereas, the sexual expression of many disabled persons is criminalized by so-called "sodomy laws;" and

Whereas, the United States Supreme Court, on June 30, 1986, ruled to deny the right of privacy and stated that the Constitution does not protect sexual relations between consenting adults in the privacy of their own homes, thereby intruding on the privacy of heterosexual and homosexual alike; and

Whereas, the Court's majority opinion claiming there is "no connection between family, marriage, or procreation on the one hand and homosexual activity on the other" clearly denies the family life of gay and lesbian people; and

Whereas, Justice Harry Blackman in his majority opinion notes "the Court's almost obsessive focus on homosexual activity" while "the fact that individuals define themselves in a

significant way through their intimate sexual relationships with others suggests, in a nation as diverse as ours that there may be many ‘right’ ways of conducting those relationships;” and

Whereas, the majority opinion equates private, consenting adult homosexual conduct with “incest and other sexual crimes,” not taking into account expressions of love and intimacy in gay and lesbian relationships; and

Whereas, history demonstrates that obsessive fear and violence is encouraged by such thinking;

Therefore, Be It Resolved, the Sixteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ reaffirms the actions of past General Synods supporting the human rights of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation; and

Affirms the right to privacy, free from government intrusion, for all adults in their private, consensual, sexual relationships; and

Directs the Office of the President and the Office for Church in Society to work diligently to insure that right at the federal, state, and local levels [of government]; and

Urges individuals, congregations, Associations, and Conferences to work for repeal of current laws which make private consensual sexual behavior a crime, and work for enactment of legislation that guarantees the civil liberties of all persons without regard to sexual orientation; and

Urges United Church of Christ bodies meeting in states which have so-called “sodomy laws” to plan events making public witness to the church’s commitment to defend the right to privacy.

No financial implications.