RESOLUTION FOR MINDFUL AND FAITHFUL EATING
A Resolution of Witness
Submitted by the Southern California-Nevada Conference

SUMMARY

Our dietary choices can have profound implications for the environment, human well-being, and animal welfare. Therefore, we encourage Christians to explore and discuss how food choices can accord with Christian values and beliefs. To this end, we seek the development and utilization of an Adult Education curriculum addressing issues related to food choices.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The Bible affirms that humans have a sacred responsibility to care for the earth (Genesis 2:15) and our own bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19); prohibits cruelty to animals (Deuteronomy 22:10, 25:4); expresses concerns for workers (James 5:4), proclaims our Christian unity despite our dietary differences (Romans 14:20-21), and describes the peaceful, harmonious coexistence among all God’s creatures as an ideal. St. Francis of Assisi and Albert Schweitzer both recognized God’s concern for animals.

Previous General Synod actions have expressed concern for God’s creation and called for responsible stewardship (“A Perspective on Christian Life Style and Ecology,” 10th General Synod, 1975; “Integrity of Creation, Justice and Peace Proposed Priority, 17th General Synod 1989; “Global Warming,” 22nd General Synod, 1999; and “A Resolution on Climate Change,” 26th General Synod, 2007); for the rights of workers (“A Resolution on Worker Justice at Smithfield,” 26th General Synod, 2007); and for the humane treatment of animals (“Respect for Animals,” 19th General Synod, 1993).

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, our dietary choices reflect many of these social, environmental, and economic justice issues, and
WHEREAS, modern intensive farming is a leading cause of land, water, and energy consumption; worldwide animal agriculture contributes more to global warming (18% of greenhouse gases) than all forms of transportation combined (14%) (“Livestock’s Long Shadow,” UN Food and Agriculture, 2006); and long-distance transport of food further increases the impact of our diets on the environment; and
WHEREAS, the high injury rates and mistreatment of slaughterhouse workers has been well-documented (Slaughterhouse by Gail Eisnitz), and
WHEREAS, the intensive crowding and unhealthy living conditions that typify concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) do not show respect for animals, and

WHEREAS, animal and human welfare issues are intricately linked in numerous other ways, such as 1) pollution problems caused by CAFOs, particularly in Iowa and North Carolina; 2) bacterial resistance to antibiotics caused by the routine feeding of antibiotics to animals; 3) “Mad Cow Disease,” bird flu, and other human health risks associated with intensive animal agricultural practices; 4) a wide range of medical disorders linked to the typical American diet, including heart disease, obesity, diabetes, arthritis, and certain cancers (Journal of the American Dietetic Association 2003;103:748-765); and 5) the negative impact of CAFOs on small family farms and thus on rural life, culture, and community, and

WHEREAS, people have different nutritional needs, financial situations, and degrees of access to food, such that a mindful and faithful diet for one person at one location might be very different from a mindful and faithful diet for another person at another location. For some people, animal agriculture may be an essential component of mindful and faithful eating, and

WHEREAS, Christians are called to make God-centered choices in every aspect of life; and our church communities are most vibrant when we respect the diversity of views, values, beliefs, and ways to address a given social justice concern; and our church communities can help us discern such God-centered living amidst this diversity; and consequently, faithful Christians will make different consumption choices in response to the call for mindful and faithful eating.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-eighth General Synod encourages Conferences, Associations, congregations and individuals to explore ways in which our food choices can be mindful and faithful, so that, to the best of our abilities, what we eat reflects our values and beliefs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the UCC Covenanted Ministries identify and/or develop curricula for all ages that compassionately and respectfully explores the ways in which our diets impact our ecological “footprint” on the earth, human and animal welfare concerns, healthy nourishment for our bodies, and the needs and concerns of workers. These curricula would further explore ways that our food choices affect food security and the equitable availability of food for all God’s children.

FUNDING

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

IMPLEMENTATION

Justice and Witness Ministries is requested to implement this resolution.