

97-GS-49 VOTED: The Twenty-first General Synod adopts the Resolution "Access to the Age of Computer Information."

RESOLUTION ACCESS TO THE AGE OF COMPUTER INFORMATION®

WHEREAS, multimedia technologies involving a linkage of computers, telephone modems, fax machines, cable, mobile phones, television, teleconferencing and video conferencing will shape our future way of life;

WHEREAS, these tools will enable the creation of "virtual workplaces" not bound to location but requiring certain skills, and these workplaces will account for a large percentage of the new jobs in the U.S. by the year 2010;

WHEREAS, social analysts are already using the terms "the information rich" and "the information poor" in describing our society;

WHEREAS, new technological development has accounted for the projected elimination of 25 million jobs -- 28 percent of them in the private sector -- creating a permanent unemployment status in the U.S. (Wall Street Journal 3/16/93);

WHEREAS, the shaping of such "post-modern consciousness" must, of necessity, be multi-racial and multi-cultural if it is to be holistic.

WHEREAS, resource allocations for public schools vary dramatically in the U.S. and create unequal access to technology and education; and

WHEREAS, economic concerns involve not only basic access to hardware and technology but also the further cost of access to systems, services and networks, such as cable television, network service providers and the Internet;

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

1. acknowledges the use of new information technologies and affirms their potential power to increase our knowledge and understanding of the world around us;
2. advocates for full access for all people including:
 - hardware (tools),
 - education,
 - control in helping to shape the use of technology in our society, and
 - network service providers;
3. supports diversity in ownership of business related to the creation and delivery of such technologies, including ownership by small entrepreneurs, women and people of color;
4. supports the rights of workers and unions to operate in these industries;
5. encourages clergy and lay persons to raise questions in a variety of settings, about technology access in order to improve educational opportunities, affect public policy and extend access to more people;
6. urges churches to act in local communities to help ensure that all students receive education and skills needed to make use of new technology;
7. urges local churches to become media and training centers as a resource, particularly to poor communities, and to do so as part of "The Church as a Safe Space" programs as well as day care and church school programs;
8. urges local churches to explore use of on-line services to connect youth and adults in building understanding of the diverse world in which we live;
9. requests the Office of Communication and the Office for Church in Society to develop resources to enable local churches to use their facilities and programs to address this issue and to communicate to local churches the availability of these resources;

10. requests that the Office of Communication and Office for Church in Society continue to monitor Federal regulatory legislation which governs the creation, licensing and flow of such information and technology in a way which protects and includes communities of poor people and people of color; and
11. asks all settings of the church to continue to monitor the quality and content of information and programming that the various media and technologies offer, as well as the overt and underlying values communicated by that content.

Subject to the availability of funds.