

01-GS-14 VOTED with abstentions: The Twenty-Third General Synod adopts the Resolution “A Call for Study on Reparations for Slavery.”

CALL FOR STUDY ON REPARATIONS FOR SLAVERY

WHEREAS the institution of slavery is internationally recognized as a crime for which there is no statute of limitations;

WHEREAS uncompensated labor was demanded from enslaved Africans and their descendants for more than two centuries on United States soil;

WHEREAS reparations is a process to remember, repair, restore, make amends for wrongs, reconcile, and can never be singularly reducible to monetary terms; is an historical reckoning involving acknowledgment that an offense against humanity was committed and the victims have not received justice; speaks to a corporate or individual process to confess to a wrong, culpability, and accountability for offenses that led to beneficial gains or harm to others, and is to seek the pathway to justice from confession to reconciliation, inclusive of apology and moral, economic, political, and educational structural adjustments;

WHEREAS the principle that reparation is the appropriate remedy whenever a government unjustly abrogates the rights of a domestic group or foreign people whose rights such government is obligated to protect or uphold has been internationally recognized including:

- German reparations to the State of Israel for the Holocaust
- United States reparations to Japanese Americans for illegal internment
- Reparations by the United Kingdom to the Maori people of New Zealand;

WHEREAS this violation of the human rights of Africans has left a long legacy of subordination, segregation, and discrimination against descendants of slaves. In January 2000, the Commission to Study Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act (H.R. 40) bill was presented in the United States House of Representatives by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), which states, “To acknowledge the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery in the United States and in the thirteen American colonies between 1619 and 1865 and to establish a commission to examine the institution of slavery, subsequently *de jure* and *de facto* racial and economic discrimination against African Americans and the impact of those forces on living African Americans, to make recommendations to the Congress on appropriate remedies and other purposes”;

WHEREAS in the century and a half since the abolition of slavery, the United States government has never acknowledged or taken responsibility for its role in the enslavement of Africans and the promotion of White Supremacy;

WHEREAS the experience and legacy of enslavement, segregation, and discrimination continues to limit the life chances and opportunities of African Americans;

WHEREAS Christians must not only continue to call for the release of the captives (Leviticus 25:52), but also to proclaim liberty, bring good tidings to the afflicted, and build up the ancient ruins (Isaiah 61); and

WHEREAS General Synods of the United Church of Christ have voted ten resolutions, statements, and pronouncements on racism since 1963;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages Conferences, Associations, congregations, agencies, and ministries of the United Church of Christ to join in active study and education on issues dealing with reparations for slavery;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ be called on to develop a study paper with scriptural basis to equip churches and individual Christians so that they

might urge local schools to adopt history texts that tell the truth about the history of slavery, encourage them to communicate to elected government representatives their faith-based reasons for support of a formal apology for slavery, and create a congressional commission for the study of reparations issues; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls on its General Minister and President, John Thomas, and other United Church of Christ leaders to be in dialogue with leaders of other Christian denominations, other faith groups, and leaders and activists in the secular community to raise this issue at every opportunity.

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

