

01-GS-18 VOTED with abstentions: The Twenty-third General Synod adopts the resolution, "Calling Upon the Church of Christ to Initiate a Jubilee for Justice for the Rural United States," as amended in Committee.

CALLING UPON THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO INITIATE A JUBILEE FOR JUSTICE FOR THE RURAL UNITED STATES

BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ requests the Justice and Witness Ministries to develop a coordinated program of education and action to initiate a Jubilee of Justice for the Rural United States, implementing and updating past General Synod pronouncements concerning the rural United States and agriculture, and focusing attention on the immediacy of action required to prevent the further collapse of family farm agriculture and the communities which serve agriculture; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such a Jubilee for Rural Justice should give priority and emphasis to enable the United Church of Christ, its churches, and its members, to engage in ministries of advocacy for social and economic justice on behalf of family farmers and rural communities, to oppose industrialized and corporatized structures of agriculture, and to work toward a vision of renewed prosperity and opportunity for a sustainable and stabilized system of family farm agriculture and rural society.

This should not only assist churches and communities to help the victims of these injustices to pick up the pieces of their lives, but it also must address the root causes by helping to create a just agricultural system that appropriately compensates family farm producers of our daily food, while ensuring proper distribution of food resources to meet basic human need and enhancing the long-term stewardship of our land, water, and natural resources for the future.

It should seek replacement of the 1996 farm law with legislation that provides a meaningful economic safety net based on the cost of production returns targeted to benefit small and mid-size family farmers, reestablishes viable systems of domestic and international food reserves, assures compliance with civil rights and effectively addresses past discrimination, and establishes a 21st-century homesteading program that will enable new, young farm families to enter into the profession of family farming and ranching.

It should seek the development of farm price-support structures that not only encourage and provide meaningful assistance to family farmers and ranchers to establish and carry out sound conservation practices, but also it should reward these operators for improved stewardship of land, water, and other natural resources. At the same time, it should discourage the speculative development or conversion of land resources that cannot environmentally sustain such development.

It should seek to address the historical dislocation of Native American farmers from their lands and the public discrimination that resulted in the dramatic loss in the number of African American family farmers and the acreage that they operated. Priority should be given by the U. S. Department of Agriculture to create new avenues of opportunity to help these and other minorities to regain their agricultural legacy as family farmers.

It should seek further discussion and rapid implementation of the recommendations

developed by the National Commission on Small Farms. These recommendations, which are consistent with past pronouncements and resolutions of the General Synod, should serve as a central base upon which to rebuild the family farm structure and a sustainable agricultural production and rural development system.

It should provide resources by which consumers can participate with producers in rebuilding local and regional food systems both at home and abroad. It should seek to build commonality between the struggles of American family farmers and food producers in developing nations. It should enlighten consumers and help clarify the injustices of existing food systems that encourage industrialized food production systems designed primarily for export to nations and societies that currently struggle to produce adequate nutrition for their populations. It should help both producers and consumers to understand the forces of globalization and how those forces can best be governed through democratic processes.

The Justice and Witness Ministries shall be responsible to develop the strategy and program for this resolution, which may include mobilizing the existing Rural Task Force. They shall submit ongoing reports to Twenty-fourth General Synod and thereafter as appropriate.

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