

O1-GS-08 VOTED: The Twenty-third General Synod adopts the resolution, "Calling on the United Church of Christ to Join the Decade to Overcome Violence."

Calling on the United Church of Christ to Join the Decade to Overcome Violence

WHEREAS the Psalmist wrote, "Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14), and the prophet Isaiah wrote "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like cattle, they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain" (Isaiah 65:25), and Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9);

WHEREAS we recall with thanksgiving the history of saints and martyrs of the church who gave their lives as witnesses for God against the powers of violence and, at the same time, we confess the role that the church has too often played in adding to the violence and injustice of the world;

WHEREAS the world's Nobel Peace laureates have appealed for a "Decade for a Culture of Nonviolence" and a "Year of Education for Nonviolence," with special emphasis on children and youth;

WHEREAS the United Nations has designated the years 2001–2010 as the Decade for Nonviolence and a Culture of Peace for the Children of the World;

WHEREAS the World Council of Churches, meeting at its Eighth Assembly in Harare, called upon its member churches to observe a Decade to Overcome Violence from 2001 to 2010, calling on its member churches to provide a clear witness to peace, reconciliation, and nonviolence, grounded in justice;

WHEREAS the U.S. Conference of the World Council of Churches began this observance with a Lenten fast from violence in 2001, requesting member churches to pray the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, "Lord make me an instrument of thy peace";

WHEREAS the United Church of Christ has designated itself as a "Just Peace" church and many local churches have designated themselves as "Just Peace" churches;

WHEREAS violence is fracturing our world, destroying our culture, and takes many forms—from the violence of war and genocide, to the violence due to the use of land mines and the proliferation of small arms, to the systemic violence of poverty and racism, to violence in the home against women and children, to the violence done to the whole of God's creation, to the violence of hate crimes and police brutality, to the violence of gangs, to the violence which erupts in U.S. schools and is found in our churches;

WHEREAS, as Christians, we are called upon to recognize that our cultural addiction to violence is a spiritual challenge that calls us to prophetic witness;

WHEREAS we have heard the call to nonviolence as an active alternative to violence

from modern prophets such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and as a way of living out Jesus' teachings and bearing witness to God's promise of peace with justice; and

WHEREAS the culture of violence surrounds us all and is found in our entertainment, our sports, our worldview, and is embedded in our history;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls on every local church to act to overcome violence in our world and especially in its own community by being a witness for peace with justice and reconciliation, through Bible study and theological reflection, and through dialogue and prayerful consideration of how it can be an active participant in the Decade to Overcome Violence;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls on the Conferences and Associations of the United Church of Christ to affirm the commitment of the United Church of Christ to support a Decade to Overcome Violence and to discern how they might become active participants in the Decade;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls on the seminaries of the United Church of Christ and the historically related seminaries to include education on issues of violence in the curriculum for the preparation of pastors and in continuing education programs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls on Justice and Witness Ministries to coordinate work in the national setting of the church around overcoming violence and to provide leadership training on nonviolence and conflict resolution and violence prevention education, to work with youth and young adults in programs to end violence, to advocate for an end to land mines and the proliferation of small arms, and to work to overcome the institutional and systemic violence of racism and poverty;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls on Wider Church Ministries to explore appropriate ways for the United Church of Christ to participate in the United Nations Decade for Nonviolence and a Culture of Peace and to develop necessary resources for such participation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls on the Office of General Ministries to coordinate the promotion and information for the United Church of Christ's participation in the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod calls on Local Church Ministries to produce the appropriate bulletin inserts and curriculum resources for local churches to participate in the Decade to Overcome Violence.

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