

03-GS-49 VOTED: The Twenty-fourth General Synod adopts the resolution “Disaster Relief and Undocumented Persons”

DISASTER RELIEF AND UNDOCUMENTED PERSONS

Purpose and Expected Outcome:

To inform the wider church concerning the growing likelihood that “paperless” persons affected by disasters may be re-victimized by deportation by the United States government if they seek assistance and to increase our vigilance, support and advocacy on behalf of these brothers and sisters.

Text of the Resolution:

In May, 2003, violent storms and tornadoes ripped through many states including: Kansas, Oklahoma, Southern Illinois, Tennessee, Indiana and Missouri. Over two hundred seventy-six tornadoes touched down in Missouri alone and seventy-six of one hundred three counties were declared federal disaster areas. These regions are still reeling from the devastation, but amidst the mud and debris, God is still speaking.

Through the efforts of the affected Conferences and the National Disaster Ministries Office, members of the United Church of Christ continue to respond to the unmet needs of those harmed by the storms. Disaster response in the United Church of Christ is often performed in concert with many ecumenical interfaith, secular and governmental partners. In particular, the United States government plays a critical role in federally-declared disasters.

In every disaster, some of the greatest unmet needs are among undocumented or “paperless” people that are excluded from the benefits of governmental assistance. The United Church of Christ and other faith-based disaster responders are often their only source for relief. A concern has arisen while responding to the May storms, that our “paperless” sisters and brothers were re-victimized by governmental deportations triggered by the visibility brought to them by seeking relief as victims of disaster.

In order to continue to work in partnership with government agencies, disaster responders from the faith community need to be assured that all information gathered by federal agencies during disaster response is treated with appropriate confidentiality and is used solely for the purposes of relief and recovery.

All settings of the United Church of Christ are urged to remain vigilant advocates for undocumented and “paperless” persons as they engage in disaster preparedness, mitigation and response in partnership with governmental agencies.