

01-GS-44 VOTED: The Twenty-Third General Synod adopts the resolution “Health Effects and Impacts of Tobacco on Children, Teenagers, and Their Families.”

HEALTH EFFECTS AND IMPACTS OF TOBACCO ON CHILDREN, TEENAGERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

WHEREAS, God’s good gift of creation includes our bodies, and we are called to be good stewards of our life and health;

WHEREAS, part of our responsibility for sharing in the shepherding activities of society as citizens is to help create conditions for the health of our communities;

WHEREAS, tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States;

WHEREAS, worldwide, every ten seconds another person dies as a result of tobacco use;

WHEREAS, smoking of tobacco products is a major cause of illness that contributes to the premature death of hundreds of thousands people living in the United States;

WHEREAS, each day three thousand young people become regular smokers;

WHEREAS, four to five million youth aged twelve to seventeen are current smokers;

WHEREAS, smoking rates among youngsters continue to rise and are at their highest levels in nineteen years;

WHEREAS, tobacco companies are targeting their promotional efforts to children and youth with the result that ninety percent of new smokers are teenagers or younger;

WHEREAS, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke worsens symptoms of asthma and causes respiratory infections in children;

WHEREAS, we recognize that the right of individuals to use tobacco products in religious ceremonies should be preserved; and

WHEREAS, it is our Christian responsibility to speak out and take action against those who would seek profit and wealth by promoting tobacco;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod recommends that Justice and Witness Ministries call upon the appropriate Justice and Witness Ministry Teams, the Parish Life and Leadership Team in Local Church Ministries, Health and Wholeness in Wider Church Ministries, local churches, Associations, and Conferences to be in discussion about the implications of recent research on the health impacts of tobacco usage on children, teenagers, and their families;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod requests that Justice and Witness Ministries encourage local churches, Conferences, and Associations to engage in collaborative community and national efforts that are aimed at preventing and/or reducing youth tobacco use including:

sponsoring self-help groups for persons who want to stop smoking,

providing children and youth group learning opportunities that educate them about the health effects of smoking and smokeless tobacco, and

providing educational sessions for parents on how to guide and talk with their children about tobacco;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod requests that Justice and Witness

Ministries convene the United Church of Christ Parish Nurse Network, the United Church of Christ Physician's Network, the United Church of Christ Health Task Force, the Interministry Health Table, the Association of United Church Educators, Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and other interested and identified bodies to work in concert to identify ministry models and strategies to show how church members and churches can respond to the tobacco issue; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that covenanted ministries, organizations, health and human service institutions associated with the United Church of Christ, Conferences, Associations, local churches, and members of the United Church of Christ express compassion and concern for persons who are currently addicted to the use of tobacco products and be urged to join in education and advocacy activities to advance legislation that reduces the smoking of tobacco products without being punitive towards individuals who do smoke.

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

References

Health and Wellness Program, JWM Public Life and Social Policy, JWM David Jenkins, Ph.D., United Church of Christ, Chapel Hill
Ted Johnson, Ed.D., West Parish UCC, Andover