

1999

RESOLUTION: CHRISTIANS, RICHES AND POVERTY IN OUR TIMES

WHEREAS, Scripture declares woe to "those who add house to house and field to field" (Isaiah 5:8a); decries oppressive laws that "turn aside the needy from justice" (Isaiah 10:2a); and calls us to "defend the rights of the poor" (Proverbs 31:9b); to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ who came preaching good news to the poor (Luke 4:18); and to attend to them (Matthew 25:35-40); and

WHEREAS, Worldwide almost twice the number of people live in extreme poverty as did 10 years ago, while at the same time, riches pile up for the wealthy so that now some 350 billionaires have a net worth equaling the income of the poorest 2.6 billion people; and

WHEREAS, Statewide, the number of Connecticut children in poverty has almost tripled in the last 10 years; and

WHEREAS, The root causes of this poverty in our times are complex, yet include attitudes as the unrelenting desire for increased corporate profitability and such practices as slave wages paid by American Corporations in foreign countries, sweatshop conditions in our own country, and the cutting of social programs leaving the poor with few resources; and

WHEREAS, These are difficult, systemic, and long-lasting problems, which cannot be solved simply by the generous efforts of individuals, churches or other private groups (e.g., soup kitchens, relief groups, mentoring, etc.); and

WHEREAS, Long lasting solutions must be explored both at home and abroad, such as the following: forgiveness of poor countries' debts; changes in World Bank and IMF interventions (e.g. structural adjustment); ending of sweatshop labor conditions; proactive training and skill development; new approaches to USA minimum/maximum incomes; a universal single payer health system; and separation of basic life areas (e.g., public education, criminal justice, etc.) from market forces.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we the delegates to the 132nd Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ encourage local churches to focus attention on the issues of poverty and wealth in these times by exploring Biblical teaching regarding our responsibility to the poor and the responsible acquisition and use of wealth; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we request that in the year 2000, the regional Justice and Witness Ministry Teams and the Peace and Justice Network of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, develop and/or distribute resources [using pertinent sources such as the 1987 UCC Economic Justice Study, the 1986/96 economic statement by the United States Catholic Bishops], that will help congregations explore the Biblical, theological and social-economic aspects of these economic questions, and seek healing, long-term solutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we request the Conference staff, our Public Policy Advocate, and church members to support the efforts of the Connecticut Interfaith Budget Watch and to communicate these concerns regarding poverty and riches to Connecticut legislators and to our Congressional representatives, requesting them to support legislation which holds promise for healing.