

1980

RESOLUTION: BROADCAST MEDIA, A PUBLIC RESOURCE

WHEREAS the 11th General Synod of the United Church of Christ has affirmed that the airwaves derive from God's creation, are subject to the same requirements of stewardship that apply to other forms of creation, and that users of the airwaves are trustees of a valued public resource which is entrusted to them only temporarily and on condition that they operate responsibly in the interest of the whole people; and

WHEREAS the public interest requirements for operation of broadcast frequencies, which are set forth in the Communications Act of 1934 and regulations promulgated thereunder, are not understood by the public they are designed to protect; and

WHEREAS public understanding should include cable television, still an infant industry in its technology and possibilities for providing diversity, but with an almost unlimited capacity for bringing information into Connecticut homes; and

WHEREAS it is important that all people in Connecticut benefit from the greatest possible diversity of programming on the air and receive access to social, political, aesthetic, cultural and other moral ideas and experiences,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, to protect the public interest and United Church of Christ members from technical, financial, commercial and programming misuses of broadcasted radio, TV and cable TV, the Connecticut Conference directs the Department of Church and Society to:

1. Study the governmental and private policies that are intended to determine what is broadcast on television (UHF, VHF and cable) and radio, and bring to the attention of local church members those situations which threaten their moral, ethical and legal rights to have diverse programs which serve local community needs, minorities, the young, the old, the poor and all groups and individuals.
2. Inform local church members of the applicable State of Connecticut statutes and Public Utilities Commission regulations regarding cable TV. Advise them of the present lack of statutory protection for public interest rights and benefits relating to the regulation of cable TV franchises and their operations. Encourage local church members to exercise their citizens rights to express their opinions with regard to the present inadequacies of cable legislation in areas of public service, access channels, limiting license terms, and protest procedures, etc.
3. Inform and reaffirm to local church members their on-going responsibilities under FCC rules and policies (a) to communicate with, and, if necessary, petition local broadcast managers with their comments, critiques and dissatisfaction regarding the present and future quality, values and messages contained within the programs and commercials they broadcast, and (b) to comment or protest to the Federal Communications Commissioner when the public interest is abandoned, threatened or mis-served by broadcaster, and further to instruct how this is best done.

