

RESOLUTION: SAFEGUARDING OF CIVIL LIBERTIES IN THE WAKE OF SEPTEMBER 11TH

- WHEREAS creation of humankind in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) endows every person with worth and dignity regardless of race, national origin, or religion; and
- WHEREAS in the quest for security people of faith must never forget that our ultimate trust is in God (Psalm 4:8) and that reliance on earthly power and human instruments is misplaced (Isaiah 31:1; Jeremiah 17:5-8); and
- WHEREAS we live in a broken world where false prophets offer easy solutions and promise what they cannot deliver, “saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ where there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14); and
- WHEREAS Paul warns, “When people say, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction comes” (1 Thessalonians 5:3); and
- WHEREAS Christians are called to “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building” (Romans 14:19; cf Luke 19:42); and
- WHEREAS Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43ff) and John assures us that there is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18); and
- WHEREAS, “it is not right to be partial in judgment” (Proverbs 24:23 Jewish Publication Society), for God’s justice is impartial (Malachi 2:9), and
- WHEREAS God’s impartial justice extends to all, including the alien, whom we are to love and treat justly (Deuteronomy 10:19; Ezekiel 22:7); and
- WHEREAS General Synod 20, adopted a resolution “Affirming the Dignity and Self Worth of Immigrants,” warning against intolerance directed at “non-European” immigrants, affirming the dignity and self worth of all people, and deploring any attempt to blame immigrants for social ills in this country; and
- WHEREAS “God judges all humanity and all nations by that will of righteousness declared through prophets and apostles” (UCC Statement of Faith, Moss adaptation); and
- WHEREAS fundamental civil rights reflecting human worth and dignity are embodied in such principles as the writ of habeas corpus, the presumption of innocence, freedom from self-incrimination, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, and freedom of speech and association; and
- WHEREAS the terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001, by their indiscriminate and brutal nature have created an atmosphere of distrust and fear in which our government is expected to take steps to reduce the risk of future attacks and enhance security; and
- WHEREAS legislation has been introduced in the Congress for the purpose of giving law enforcement agencies broad new powers to combat terrorism; and

WHEREAS preserving the principles of a democratic society that are at the core of the American way of life and that are guaranteed by our Constitution requires that the requirements of security be reconciled with the demands of liberty and justice; and

WHEREAS fear is never a sound basis for making public policy and our own recent history (e.g. the internment of American citizens of Japanese ancestry during World War II and the ruining of lives and reputations during the anti-Communist witch hunts of the 1950s) has shown what can happen when fear leads us to abandon democratic principles; and

WHEREAS thousands of innocent persons could be affected by legislation intended to counter terrorism; and

WHEREAS law enforcement agencies already have substantial powers to investigate acts of terrorism and persons reasonable suspected of planning or carrying out such acts; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

that we the delegates to the 134th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ affirm our commitment to our democratic system and to our Constitution and affirm our belief that legitimate security needs of our country can be achieved without eroding the liberties and freedoms that are at the heart of the American way of life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

that we encourage our churches, our legislators, and our Public Policy Advocate to support only those legislative proposals that are consistent with democratic principles of fairness and due process for all persons regardless of race, religion, ethnic identity, or national origin; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

that we encourage our churches, our legislators, and our Public Policy Advocate to oppose any proposals that would (for example):

- Permit indefinite detention of non-citizens without probable cause to suspect that they might be involved in criminal activities and without the right to judicial review of the detention;
- Permit the use of wire tapping and electronic surveillance without the normal safe guards that ensure privacy;
- Permit law enforcement officials to conduct secret searches;
- Create a new crime of “domestic terrorism” that could be used to prosecute protestors whose acts present no threat to national security; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED

the office of Justice and Witness and the Justice Witness Ministry team be requested to provided resources to clergy and congregations, to facilitate this resolution.