

RESOLUTION ON PRISON REFORM AND EDUCATION

WHEREAS, holy scripture tells us that God dreams of liberty for the prisoners and freedom for those held captive: “Happy is he who.... executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free” (Psalms 146: 7 Revised Standard Version), “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives.” (Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18 RSV); and

WHEREAS, statistics show that approximately 50% of inmates in all Connecticut prisons have no High School diploma or General Education Diploma¹; and

WHEREAS, the prisoners’ lack of knowledge or skills keep them captive, both in and out of prison; and

WHEREAS, women who have successfully experienced educational opportunities during incarceration are more likely to pursue education upon release, have an increased sense of self esteem, want to live their lives in the present, enjoy the freedom and richness that life offers and are less likely to return to prison; and

WHEREAS, there is no doubt that higher education for prisoners is one of the most effective ways to reduce repeat offenses, reduce crime and lessen the tax payer burden, and

WHEREAS; while statistics from York Correctional Institution concern only the women of that facility, the plight of men in other facilities is similar concerning lack of encouragement to further their educational status while incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, ignorance of the plight of inmates in the Connecticut prison system keeps the situation from changing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we the delegates to the 136th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, ask that the Justice and Witness Ministry Team of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ gather materials and provide all churches in the Conference with resources that will assist them in becoming better informed about the plight of women and men in the Connecticut prison system, helping our churches to become advocates and agents for real change in the lives of offenders from each and every town in Connecticut; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that our Public Policy Advocate inform the churches of upcoming legislation concerning prison reform; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Connecticut Conference Board of Directors and the Conference Minister are requested to communicate frequently with the Department of Corrections recommending the establishment of incentive programs that will encourage inmates to continue their education while in prison.

¹ Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, *Recidivism in Connecticut* (Hartford: Connecticut General Assembly, December 2001), 31.