

CALL TO CHRISTIAN ACTION IN SOCIETY
A Resolution Approved by General Synod II (1959)
*Submitted to the General Synod of the United Church of Christ
by the Council for Christian Social Action*

Half a century ago the four communions which now form the United Church of Christ joined with others in the Federal Council of Churches to proclaim the Social Creed of the Churches. They summoned the churches to stand for such ideals as the abolition of child labor, the release of workers from employment for one day in seven, the protection of workers from occupational hazards, and the right of employers and employees to organize. Many of these ideals of the churches are now embodied in the social legislation of our nation. This "Call to Christian Action in Society" is an attempt to discover what the Lord requires of us today.

1. The Gospel is the Good News of what God has done and is doing in the world. In Jesus Christ God entered the arena of human history, grappled with the principalities and powers of evil, won a victory over those powers, and made manifest his love and gracious purpose toward all men. In grateful response, the Christian seeks to tell the story of God's action in ways which are persuasive for the men and women of our day.
2. At the same time, the church responds to God's saving act by seeking His will in all human relationships. For God as revealed in Jesus Christ is the ruler of all human affairs—nations, social orders, institutions. To Him belong our souls and bodies, our possessions and cultures, our churches and communities.
3. God has made us to live together in community. Without love of neighbor there is no love of God. Without service to men there is no service to God. We live, we rise, we fall as members of one family under God.
4. We confess the pride and greed which separate us from God and from each other. Before God we repent of our smugness and sloth, our absorption with self and neglect of neighbor. The judgment of God lies upon us and all our affairs.
5. We rejoice in many signs of the power and grace of God in the events of our time. People are asking recognition of their God-given worth. Barriers between races, classes, and nations are being brought down. We are thankful that God is stirring his people against injustice and oppression.

I. THE WORLD OF NATIONS

6. We live in a world of nation states, constantly growing in number. This world has become so interdependent and interrelated that nearly every action has an appalling number of relations and effects. The power struggle is therefore greatly intensified, particularly between communist and non-communist states.
7. Deeper than the divisions, however, is mankind's essential unity under God. Deeper also are the common danger, the common need, the common hope. Nations must therefore develop a larger measure of mutual confidence through more creative use of peaceful methods for relieving international tensions.

8. In the contemporary situation each nation will inevitably seek to maintain military force at a level considered necessary to national security. We must, however, avoid the militarization of United States foreign policy. We should strive for the development of an effective and enforceable body of international law.
9. We therefore call upon our churches and their members to pray and work:
 10. For peace, justice, and the welfare of all nations and peoples;
 11. For the United Nations as a major resource for the settlement of disputes, for peaceful change, and for economic and social development;
 12. For a full implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
 13. For creative sharing among nations of persons, ideas, and skills;
 14. For deeper awareness of the problems, legitimate interests, and fears of other peoples, especially those in the newer nations and in nations under communist rule;
 15. For effective international control and reduction of all national armaments, including the testing of nuclear weapons;
 16. For the use of our wealth, personal resources, and trade policies in a world-wide attack upon human misery;
 17. For a clearer demonstration through our own national life that both order and justice can be achieved under free institutions;
 18. For the extension and strengthening of the world-wide Christian community, that it may help to provide spiritual foundations for a world community, combat ignorance, superstition, and traditional social evils, and serve as a reconciling fellowship among all peoples.

II. AMERICAN CULTURE

19. Our cities rise higher. Our suburbs spread afar. Streams of people move from place to place across the land. Astounding inventions provide abundance of goods, swiftness of communication, miracles of healing, and relief from many burdensome tasks. Opportunities for educational and cultural enrichment are multiplied.
20. In the midst of this abundance, we are beset by much that is trivial, humanizing, and vulgar. Prodigious plenty tempts us to selfish indulgence while millions of people in our land and abroad live in want. Private consumption has reached unprecedented levels while public services on which all of us depend are starved. Concentrations of power, controlling the channels of information, beguile masses of people into unthinking conformity and slavish striving for goods that do not satisfy. Much of our leisure time is devoted to forms of

entertainment and escape that dull us to the world's need. We are tempted to love things and use people when we should love people and use things. And even in the midst of crowds our lives are often empty, anxious, and alone.

21. Now as always God calls us to a new life that offers genuine meaning, faith, and community. He sets before us goals that are higher than comfort and success. He summons us to develop our capacities for mental and spiritual growth. He frees us from our bondage to the networks of opinion and taste. He saves us from calling good evil or evil good. He searches the streets of our cities and the by-ways of the countryside—not for the church that takes pride in its popularity, its wealth, or the splendor of its buildings—but for the church that does justice and seeks truth, that cares for people and loves the Gospel, lifting up family, community, and world.
22. We therefore call upon our churches and their members to pray and work:
 23. For a deeper understanding of the Christian meaning of daily work;
 24. For the participation of Christians in organizations of farmers, labor, management, the professions, and other vocations, encouraging democratic procedures, wise practices, and concern for the public interest;
 25. For fuller appreciation of the role, rights, and responsibilities of both organized labor and management in the democratic functioning of an industrial society;
 26. For policies that safeguard the well-being of the farmer and the farm family as well as the interest of the general public in the efficient production of abundant food and fiber;
 27. For the conservation and development of the earth's resources for the benefit of mankind now and in the future;
 28. For economic institutions and practices which provide meaningful work, serve human needs, eliminate blighting poverty, prevent unemployment and harmful inflation, and bring about more equitable sharing in the goods and services which our productivity makes possible;
 29. For action to strengthen the family and counteract the forces making for family disorganization;
 30. For the support and expansion of necessary public services such as schools, transportation, and health programs;
 31. For increased educational and cultural opportunities for all;
 32. For more effective programs of education and action in church and community on the meaning and effect of alcoholic beverages, narcotics and gambling;

33. For the provision of adequate social services for special groups such as the young, the aging, the handicapped, the mentally ill, and the victims of alcohol and drugs;
34. For the protection of migrant workers and their families;
35. For the admission of more immigrant refugees and their integration into the American community;
36. For better methods in the treatment and rehabilitation of those convicted of offenses against the law;
37. For the use of leisure time in creative avocations, in wholesome recreation, in strengthening family life, in enrichment of human culture, and in service to church and community.

III. RACE RELATIONS

38. Jesus Christ as Lord and Shepherd of all men requires us as his followers to repent of those violations of brotherhood and justice which create separation, tension, and conflict between men of different races and to manifest—within the Church, the Body of Christ, and within the community of nations—acts worthy of such repentance.
39. We therefore call upon our churches and their members to pray and work:
 40. For the elimination of pride and prejudice from our hearts;
 41. For the end of racial segregation and discrimination in our communities—in church life, in housing, in employment, in education, in public accommodations and services, and in the exercise of political rights;
 42. For the alleviation of poverty, ignorance, illness, and all other handicaps which are aggravated by unequal opportunity and by segregation imposed by law or custom;
 43. For the furtherance of human rights throughout the world and respect for all men as persons created in the image of God.

IV. POLITICAL LIFE

44. God holds political life under his providence and judgment. It is the area in which men and nations make some of the most fateful decisions of our time. In this process controversy and compromise serve important and necessary functions.
45. We therefore call upon our churches and their members to pray and work:
 46. For the support of effective, representative, and responsible government;

47. For active participation of Christians in political life as voters, workers in parties, candidates, office holders, and civil servants;
48. For the critical evaluation, within the fellowship of the church and in the perspective of the Christian faith, of the policies and practices of candidates, office holders, and political parties;
49. For a church with bonds of Christian fellowship so strong that it dares to discuss and act upon civic and political issues.
50. For maintaining the independence of the churches and the state, and for creative cooperation between them.

DEDICATION

51. To these tasks we dedicate ourselves in the name of God who calls us to seek justice for all his children and to love our neighbor not only in word but in deed. In him is our confidence and our trust.