

01-GS-23 VOTED with abstentions: The Twenty-third General Synod adopts the resolution, “Colombia.”

COLOMBIA

WHEREAS the Psalmist proclaims, “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity” (Psalm 133:1);

WHEREAS Jesus in the Beatitudes taught his disciples “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9);

WHEREAS Paul reminds us of our unity in Christ when he wrote, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12);

WHEREAS on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), peoples of every nation on earth were present and the Holy Spirit filled them and they had understanding of one another, testifying to God’s power;

WHEREAS we are entrusted with the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18) and are called to be “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20);

WHEREAS the Connecticut Conference and the Central Atlantic Conference at their respective Annual Meetings in 2000 have passed a resolution of partnership between their Conferences and the Mennonite Church in Colombia;

WHEREAS Justice and Witness Ministries, and the Latin American/Caribbean Office of the Common Global Ministries worked in collaboration with Witness for Peace to send a diverse, interfaith delegation to Colombia from March 11–13, 2001, which included 20 clergy and lay representatives of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ from around the country;

WHEREAS these delegates were told repeatedly by leaders from all sectors of Colombian society, including religious peace and justice workers, human rights advocates, representatives from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, campesinos, and members of the business sector, that the violence in their country is not about a “war on drugs,” but rather is the result of economic chaos due to widespread poverty and gross inequities in the distribution of resources;

WHEREAS despite increasing efforts of the U.S. over the past five years to reduce coca productions in Latin America primarily through policies of interdiction and aerial fumigation of crops, which is causing widespread damage to the environment in the Colombian rain forest and massive destruction of edible crops as well, overall coca production has continued to increase over this period due to a consistently increasing demand in the United States; and

WHEREAS international human rights organizations, as well as the judicial branch of the Colombian government, have documented that 80% of the human rights violations and military violence being perpetrated in Colombia at this time is due to the paramilitary forces, which often act as an extension of and in cooperation with the Colombian military forces, who are being trained by the United States and who are the primary recipients of aid through Plan Colombia. (Plan Colombia is the U.S. government sponsored aid package in the amount of 1.3 billion dollars

in fiscal year 2001, of which 80% of this package is for military purposes.)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates to the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges Wider Church Ministries and the Common Global Ministries Board to develop a presence in Colombia in cooperation with ecumenical partners to work for peace, justice, and human rights; and develop a brief study guide for congregations on the subject;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ calls upon the National Council of Churches and Church World Service to support efforts for peacemaking in Colombia and assistance to the displaced;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a national United Church of Christ delegation, in cooperation with ecumenical partners, visit Colombia before the Twenty-fourth General Synod and report to the church their findings;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ, in keeping with recommendations from the United Church of Christ/Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Witness for Peace March delegation to Colombia, calls on the members of its churches to urge U.S. policymakers to stop all further military aid to Colombia, and support a negotiated peace process which includes all sectors; to reallocate funds previously spent on military aid to be used strictly for humanitarian purposes; to stop any further aerial fumigation of coca crops and instead support manual eradication, along with subsidizing alternate crop production; and to provide adequate funding for drug consumption prevention and treatment on request for addicts in the U.S. to reduce overall demand;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ actively respond and allocate resources to help alleviate the needs of the displaced families and individuals in Colombia; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the United Church of Christ urges Justice and Witness Ministries to advocate for humanitarian aid for the displaced in Colombia; for peacemaking and human rights as our nation's priority in relation to Colombia; and for focused attention on the relationship between drug usage in the United States and the suffering of innocent people in Colombia; and further urges Justice and Witness Ministries to advocate for drug education and increased drug treatment centers in the United States.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.