

**Pronouncement on UCC Full Divestment of all Financial Resources
from all Corporations Doing Business with South Africa
A Resolution Approved by General Synod XV (1985)**

SUMMARY

Since there has been discussion within the United Church of Christ at all levels of the Church, dating back to the Fifth General Synod in 1965, concerning the escalating oppression by the racist apartheid regime of South Africa and the responsibility of the Church to sever all support for this regime, the time has now come for the United Church of Christ to fully divest all financial resources from all corporations doing business with South Africa. This pronouncement is a call to the Church to fulfill our Statement of Faith through this action. The Word of Life, Jesus Christ, mandates the Church to be responsible and to challenge the evil injustice of apartheid through an effective strategy.

BACKGROUND

In 1965 the Fifth General Synod recommended “economic sanctions as a remedial action pending changes in apartheid.” In 1969 the Seventh General Synod recommended that “all investments and funds be withdrawn from financial institutions doing business with South Africa.” However, the action of the Seventh General Synod has yet to be fully implemented. Subsequent General Synods have raised the issue of divestment for discussion and internal analysis throughout the Church. What has intervened since has been the grim reality of increasingly vicious beatings, murder, rape, unjust imprisonment and other forms of violence committed against those opposing the racist South African regime. In 1977 the Eleventh General Synod affirmed:

We now believe that withdrawal of business and investments from South Africa is a central expression of the Gospel witness.

The Gospel witness involves living out the mandates of the Word of God in human history. The background of dialogue and debate within the United Church of Christ on this Issue is extensive and has brought the Church to the threshold of concrete action. We have all witnessed the failure of the Reagan Administration’s policy of “constructive engagement” towards South Africa. It is important that the Church of Jesus Christ not be engaged in similar “engagements” with corporations that constructively support the present regime in South Africa. “Selective or phased divestment” in essence is no different from the Reagan Administration’s supportive foreign policy towards South Africa. In October of 1984, the Commission for Racial Justice, at its annual meeting, voted unanimously to call upon the whole United Church of Christ to fully divest its financial resources from all corporations doing business with South Africa. A similar resolution was unanimously passed in November 1984 by the Eighth Biennial Convention of United Black Christians.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL RATIONALE

Jesus Christ is our paradigm for challenging the evil of racism and injustice. The Biblical and theological imperatives of the Gospel are clear. We are called to take action to help liberate those who are oppressed at home and abroad. In the Gospel According to John, Chapter 3, it is written:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him...And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.

Jesus Christ, the Word of Life, is the true light of the world that exposes the evil deeds of nations, institutions, and societies. The Church is in the world but not of the world.

The evil of apartheid is an affront to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let our deeds and actions against the racial and human injustice of apartheid be clearly seen as deeds that have been wrought in God.

THE STATEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CONVICTION

The Fifteenth General Synod affirms the following:

1. We accept the costs and the joy of Christian discipleship and we are called at this moment in history to take concrete action against all forms of human evil and injustice, in particular, racist apartheid in South Africa.
2. We believe it is a sin to directly or indirectly support the present regime in South Africa by investing in businesses which do business with South Africa.
3. We are now called by God through Jesus Christ, the Word of Life, to withdraw the resources of the Church from direct and indirect support of apartheid and, thus, we commit ourselves to full divestment now.
4. As Christians we pray that our actions will effectuate a change in the present situation in South Africa toward justice and righteousness for all of God's people.